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FLORET,

— OR —

THE POOR GIRL.

A DOMESTIC DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS,

FROM THE TALES OF

PIERCE EGAN, ESQ.,

— BY —

DR. J. FREDERICK BABCOCK;

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

A description of the Costumes—the Characters—Entrances and Exits—the "Story" antecedent to the Play—and the whole of the Stage Business.

BANGOR, ME.

SAMUEL O. BAILEY, PRINTER, HAMMOND ST.

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CHARACTERS. — [THE POOR GIRL.]

Floret, the Poor Girl.
Daddy Windy.
Liper Leper.
Lord Victor, (Marquis of Broadlands.)
Bertram, (Earl of Brackleigh.)
Marquis, (Lord Westchester.)
Lord Nihilalbum.
Harry.
Esmond.
Constance, Lady Westchester.)
Hagar Lot.
Susan Atten.
Grannam.
Fannie Shelley.
Ida.

Gipsies, Peasants, Servants, &c.

TMP92-008573

FLORET; OR THE POOR GIRL.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Woods. Shrubbery. Near* L *and* C *a pool of water around, and in which grow flowers and water-lillies. At back of stage a path to right. Daddy Windy and Grannam discovered. Searching.*

DADDY. [*A silver haired old man in the Gipsy costume, which is tattered, dirty and ragged. In his hand, a stick.*] I tell yer, 'ole' 'ooman [*angrily and impatiently*] the Vild, Vite Rose is' nt 'ere ve've looked in every hole hereabouts. She's run'd away, ole 'ooman, d'ye hear you ole night-owl. I say she's run'd away, 'an its all your blame. I'ye as good a mine to gi' yer a dose o' Doctor Ashplant [*shaking his stick at her*] as ever I put a goolden suv'rin in my bag. Yer might ha' knowed she'd cut an' run the first favorable openin'

GRANNAM. [*Similarly dressed. Bloated and disfigured face.*] Look a 'ere old man of all, what yer fussin about. I gin er' a whollopin' an' she desaved it. An' if she's gon' I say let 'er go. She vas an ugly, ungrateful tramp a'ter all we ha' done for er'— an' ve vos *so* kind,

DADDY. Let 'er go? [*surprise*] Let 'er go? Now jes yer mind ole 'ooman an' keep that [*angrily*] ugly tongue o' yours atween your teeth. Oh you old sun-flower. You old crocus. You old burdock. Let 'er go? [*Laughing wildly.*] My Vite Rose! My lilly o' the wally! My goold mine! Not if I knows it. No, not if I knows it.

GRANNAM. Now ole man o' all, dont let yer ongry passions rise. Cause why. She's on'y hiding in fun maybe. I dessey she's gone back long afore now.

DADDY. [*His face lighting up*] So she may my Dianna, so she may, but we'll soon see, we'll soon see. [*Both exit* L.

Enter FLORET, *through path at* R.

[*Very poorly and raggedly clad; her hair is dishevelled by running; she has on no shoes or stockings; very much out of breath; she is looking around frightenedly as though fearful of being pursued.*

FLORET. O by gracious! aint I glad. [*Jumps about, laughing merrily.*] Aint I glad; I've run away from that old man and woman at last, ha, ha, ha. I fooled 'em nice, and I'll never, never

go back again, for Grannam beats me *so* awfully I'd rather die than go back [*Looking around.*] Oh my, is'nt this beautiful (*joyously clapping her hands*) just see all these flowers and lillies; wouldn't I like to stay here all the time, and Oh, there's a pond, won't I have some fun, (*running towards it*) but I hope Daddy (*pauses*) won't catch me again, (*seriously*) for then I should have to go back and sell flowers to get money for him; but I won't do it, if I know myself, and I think I have some (*drily*) slight idea. No I don't either—Oh, I've told a lie! (*laughing merrily*) I've told a lie! I've—told—a—lie! (*Correcting herself.*) I wish I did have some idea who I was, (*determinedly*) but I mean to find out some day *sure.* [*Runs and sits down by the pond, dabbling in the water with hands, and picking flowers, forming a wreath of them which she places upon her head, looking up smilingly as if to court the approbation of imaginary spectators, and breaking out suddenly into the song.*]

O, oranges, sweet oranges,
Pulpy cheeks that peep through trees.
The crabb'dest churl in all the South.
Would hardly let a thirsty mouth
Gaze at thee and long to taste,
Nor grant one golden kiss at last.
O, oranges! sweet oranges!

Yet cheeks there—yet cheeks there are,
Sweeter—O, good God! how far,
Which make a thirst like very death,
Down to the heart through lips and breath;
Yet, if we ask a taste of those,
The kindest owners would turn foes,
O, oranges! sweet oranges!

Enter a BOY, *clad as a countryman.*

BOY. [c.] That's a pretty squealing thou'st been making hereabouts, I do think. What bee'st doin' here? (*angrily.*)

FLORET. (*Starting up and gazing at him firmly, defiantly and proudly.*) What am I doing here? Can't yer see? Only gathering a few wild flowers, that's what I bee'st [*mimicing*] doing here! (*picking them.*)

BOY. Only gathering a few wild flowers? Why, you've been howling like a wild cat, and doin' it, I'll be sworn, jist to keep folks off the scent while some o' your gang ha' been snarin' rabbits (*Floret turns with a disdainful gesture*) Oh, I see pretty plain what ye be—ye're a tramp! a vagram! Be (*going towards her*) off, or I'll ha' ye put in a cage. (*Pushes her.*)

FLORET. (*angrily.*) Do not touch me, you have no right to touch me.

BOY. Aint I! Why, if thee don't troop I'll lay this cudgel (*Raises his stick*) about thy shoulders; troop, or I'll do it for thee at once. (*About to strike.*)

Enter VICTOR *from* L.

VICTOR. (*Hurriedly—Clad as a young nobleman.*) What, you rascal, would you strike a girl?

BOY. (*Angrily.*) Who the dev—(*turns*) I beg pardon, (*humbly*) my Lord, but I didn't see 'twar your lordship; I war speakin'; to this vagram here, my Lord; I war only—

VICTOR. Threatening like a cowardly scoundrel as you are, to strike her with a stick—

(FLORET *is making decided gestures of approval.*)

BOY. She be on'y a poor girl, my Lord.

VICTOR. *Only* a poor girl! why *you* are a mere brute. Being a poor girl is the greatest claim she has to your protection.

BOY. [*Surlily*] I didn't know, my Lord, but I thought I war doing my duty. The Marquis be very particular, and your lordship dunno but this vagram has been snaring rabbits or hares. She be trespassing here.

VICTOR. [*Impatiently.*] You are a fool! Go away; and remember, the next time you have to speak to a poor girl, to do it kindly, or your insolence, rudensss, and brutality may not come off quite so cheaply as it does now. Go! away with you! [*Scowling at* FLORET, BOY *exits at* R.)

FLORET. [*Aside gazing admiringly.*] Oh, what a handsome young man,

VICTOR. [*Advancing.*] Well, she's got [*aside*] a deuced pretty face if she is dressed in rags. [*To Floret.*] Well my little girl, what are you?

FLORET. [*Bashfully*] A poor girl.

VICTOR. Yes, so I perceive; but—but how do you get your living?

FLORET. How do I get my living? [*Hesitatingly,*] Well sir—Well, I aint getting a living just now. I'm running away from Daddy Windy, but when I was with him I used to sell flowers.

VICTOR. Such as those you have in your hand?

FLORET. [*Half smiling.*] No, these are but wild flowers. I arranged them to amuse myself.

VICTOR. [*Approvingly*] They are very pretty, [*aside*] and so is she—the cunningest little thing I ever saw.

FLORET. [*Tendering them.*] Please take this boquet? [*Victor smiles.*] Do not scorn it; do not scorn it, [*earnestly*] I beg of you. If I am a poor girl, I can feel that you have saved me from a blow from the stick of that cruel fellow who has just gone away, and I wish to give you something for sending him away. It is all I have. I have nothing better, or else I would give it to you. [*Victor takes it.*]

VICTOR. I will accept it with pleasure, and keep it, too—aye, as long as I live.

FLORET. [*Joyously.*] As long as you live? Will you? Oh, I am so pleased.

VICTOR. And why are you pleased my pretty child?

FLORET [*Hesitatingly.*] I dont know, per—per—perhaps it is

because—because no one so rich and so hand—handsome as you are was ever so kind to me as you have been.

VICTOR. [*Laughing.*] Where do you live?

FLORET. Nowhere—anywhere; the Daddy and Grannam are always traveling about, and they never stay long anywhere.

VICTOR. What is your name?

FLORET. [*Sadly.*] The Poor Girl!

VICTOR. Yes, I know; but what is your Christian name? [*Kindly.*]

FLORET. [*Thoughtfully.*] The Daddy sometimes calls me Floret, but I prefer the name of the Poor Girl.

VICTOR. But why should you like that not very acceptable title!

FLORET. Because, it is the name by which I was known when I was a child—a very little child—and [*bashfully.*] because—because—you took my part because I am a poor girl. [*Suddenly.*] What is your name?

VICTOR. [*Smiling*] I am called Victor.

FLORET. It is a pretty name—I—I shant—well I shant forget it.

VICTOR. I am glad of it. Do you know that you are very handsome and loveable—but I must be going as I was in a great hurry when I came here—here, give me your hand [*takes it.*] You may stay here and enjoy yourself as long as you like. I hope we shall meet again. Won't you give me a kiss? [*bends over.*]

FLORET. [*Turning quickly.*] No! no! I can't allow that [*dryly*] 'cause you know I aint old enough for that yet.

VICTOR. [*Laughing.*] Well, well. Since you wont. [*Inquiringly.*] You're quite sure you wont? [*Floret shakes her head.*] Never mind, good bye, my little lady, good bye. [*Aside.*] I must not inform her, because she would take to her heels at once, but I saw that Gipsy ruffian, from whom she is escaping, as I came here. I will go and divert his attention in a false direction and then return and renew my conversation with this strange child. [*Exits at* R.

FLORET. [*Following him with her eyes.*] O, thanks, thanks, kind sir, for your kind words to me, a poor, poor ragged Gipsy girl, and you a rich handsome lord. (*Wonderingly.*) But I wonder if he is a Lord? Yes, he must be, for that ugly man who would have struck me with his stick called him one O, I wish I was an angel, with silver wings, and flowing robes so that I might be near him all the time, (*looking at her rags—dryly*) but I aint. He is the only one who ever spoke a kind word to me except Liper Leper, and he has always been kind to me and protected me from Grannam when he could. (*Sadly*) I wish that I were dead for no one in this wide, wide world cares for poor, poor Floret. (*Throws herself on the ground and weeps bitterly—then looks up and brushing away the tears.*) Ah! me I wish he had not seen me as I am. Why *can't* I have better clothes? Why am I always to be a poor girl? (*Passionately*) I wont be. I will speak to Liper Leper and ask him where I can get clothes like the fine ladies dress in, so that, if those bright eyes look upon me again,

the handsome lips beneath them shall not curl in scorn, and mutter, she is a poor girl—a poor, ragged flower girl! Victor, Victor, beautiful name; if I could write that name on my heart as lovesick folks are said to cut them on trees, I would do it. But I wonder what is meant by lovesick. I must ask that, for O, I feel now so sad and weary and sick about the heart. I will ask Liper Leper if I can see him, for I will not ask Grannam. I will not go back to Daddy and her any more.

(*From* C. *Liper Leper a tidily and neatly dressed young Gipsy has entered silently as she spoke the last sentence, and touching her lightly on the shoulder.*)

LIPER. (*Bending.*) Where will you go, Floret? (*Quietly.*) Where will you go?

FLORET. (*Jumps up frightenedly,*) Oh, Liper how you frightened me. I thought it was Vic—(*confusion*). I mean I thought it might be Daddy. (*Takes his hand—both sit down together.*) I do not know where to go. Where shall I go?

LIPER. The Daddy and the Grannam are hunting about for you, like two mad folks. Will you not go to them?

FLORET. (*Firmly.*) No; I would sooner throw myself into yonder pool among the water-lilies than go back to them!

LIPER. But if you run away from the Daddy, what can you do? (*Pertinently*) Where will you go? Have you any money?

FLORET. (*Sadly*). No; how should I have any money? The Daddy takes all the money I receive and keeps it. No; I can see —I can see [*Sadly*]it is best for me to die, then I shall not vex the Daddy and Grannam any more; then I shall not be obliged to sell any more flowers; then I shall be at peace, and my heart will be no more sad and weary, because then I shall care nothing about these rags, and grieve no more that I am a poor girl!

LIPER. [*Soothingly.*] You must not talk of dying, Floret. You are a child, and you do not know what it means. Your life was given you to preserve, not to throw away because you happen to be poor and ragged. You know that there are many poor and ragged as well as you. I am poor—

FLORET. [*Quickly.*] But you are not ragged; yet you do not dress like—like—a young lord. [*Liper laughs.*] Do not laugh. [*Impatiently.*] I do not like to be laughed at, it makes me angry. I tell you, Liper, that you do not dress like a young lord; but yet, though I like a lord's dress better than yours, you are clean, and you wear boots and stockings. I do not. Daddy will not let me, because he says it spoils the sale of flowers. [*With energy and suddenly.*] Liper, I would rather die a thousand, thousand, thousand times than live always this horrid, ragged object. I shall be a woman some day, and—[*with a sudden scream.*] I wont live like this any longer. [*Jumps up and runs towards pool. Liper quickly follows, catches her by both wrists, and amid her struggles and sobs brings her back.*]

LIPER. Be patient, Floret,

FLORET. [*Passionately.*] I won't! I want to die. I will die?

LIPER. Do you want to run into Daddy's arms? He is not far off, hunting for you about the very spot to which you were running.

FLORET. [*Leaning her head upon his shoulder, and weeping.*] Liper, [*almost inarticulately*] you have always been kind to me—[*entreating.*] Take me, O, take me somewhere now, where I shall not be the miserable wretch I am. [*Sobbing.*]

LIPER. [*Soothingly.*] I dont know where to take you, Floret. I can watch over you and protect you from ill usage, but I know of no place to which I can take you where you will be better off than with Daddy Windy.

FLORET. [*Firmly.*] Then I will go alone.

LIPER. That you cannot, for wherever you go, I shall follow you, and save you from harm.

FLORET. [*Earnestly.*] Then save me from harm now, for if you take me not away from Daddy to some place and to some people who will give me better clothes, I will not live. You cannot prevent me seeking my long, long sleep beneath the grassy turf, if I determine that you shall not. [*Liper moved.*] Liper, you have a father and mother. [*Hand upon his arm.*] You have, when we have sat together in the still night watching the stars move silently and slowly across the heavens, as if they were so many bright eyes watching us where we sat, spoken of brothers and sisters, too. You have separated yourself from them, I know, but you could go to them if you would. You have somebody to love and think of—somebody who loves and thinks of you. I have no one—(*sadly*) no one in the whole world to care for me. Have pity on me, for my heart is breaking! (*Cries violently.*)

LIPER. (*Bewilderment.*) What can I do?

FLORET. (*Looking up through her tears.*) Do what your heart prompts you! You have always been good to me, although you gained nothing by it but my thanks and my liking—for I like you, Liper. We can't help liking those who are kind to us. Take me away Liper, and I will work very, very hard indeed, if only I can earn a little money to clothe myself, so that I will not seem so horribly mean and poor as I do now.

LIPER. (*Suddenly.*) Come along, Floret, I will run the risk! I will take you away from the Daddy. We will leave him and the Grannam to a week's sleepless amusement in this neighborhood, hunting, and I will lead you where I hope you will be able to have your wish.

FLORET. (*Jumping about joyously, clapping her hands.*) O, will you! Liper? I'm so glad, and you're so good.

LIPER. Come, let's go, for it's getting late, and we must be far from here to-morrow morning. (*Going, both.*)

FLORET. Yes, I know, (*jumps about,*) but—but, O, I feel so good; (*pauses suddenly*;) but stay, Liper, I want to ask you something. Tell me, are you lovesick?

LIPER. (*Amazed.*) What do you mean? (*They return.*)

FLORET. [*Thoughtfully.*] I don't know, I would like to know.

LIPER. [*Shaking his head—bitterly.*] I think not.

FLORET. Yes, indeed I should; and I will tell you why. I have seen you wander into a shady nook, and throw yourself upon the grass, and press your hands upon your temples, and sigh, oh! so sadly. I have often crept after you when you have done this, and listened to your mourns, because I have felt sorry for your pain. I used to think that your head ached, and I have asked Grannam to give you something to do you good, and she used to laugh at me with that rough, hateful laugh of hers, and tell me that you were love-sick. Tell me how you feel when you are love-sick, Liper?

LIPER. (*Sorrowfully.*) I cannot explain these things to you Floret. (*Gravely.*) Alas for you! You will most likely come to know the pain only too soon.

FLORET. (*Persistently.*) But tell me, Liper only this, is it a pain about the heart after you have seen some person you like very much—oh! better far than any other person you have ever seen in the whole world—a pain which comes when you know that they do not, cannot, will not care for you—never, never, oh! never?

LIPER. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) You are not so far from the mark, White Rose. (*Sighs.*)

FLORET. (*Takes his hand and looks earnestly into his face.*) I know now what being love-sick is. (*Dryly.*) I'm sorry your love-sick, Liper.

LIPER. (*Laughing outright.*) You are a droll girl, Floret, but it is getting dark, (*stage has gradually darkened*) and we must be on our way. (*They start.*)

FLORET. (*Stooping and picking a flower.*) There is money, Liper. [*Joyously.*]

LIPER. [*Clapping his hands,*] I am a fool—a fool! Why, that is the way you have made the Daddy rich. O, Floret, call me Liper no more, but fool.

FLORET. [*Emotion.*] No, Liper, not fool, but friend—the only friend the Poor Girl has in this world—this great, huge, sorrowful world! [*About to exit at* C.]

[*Enter* DADDY *and* GRANNAM *at* C.]

DADDY. Sixteen bunches a pennee, sweet lavender. [*Chuckling.*] Here's a sweet and pooty bowpot, all a blowin' and a growin'.

[*Floret shrieks with fright, turns and flies towards* F. *Grannam follows quickly, siezes her savagely and roughly drags her back, when she swoons. Liper has started forward to grapple with the Daddy who quickly draws a knife, siezes Liper at arms length and raises his knife, which is the signal for the change of scene.*]

SCENE II. *A by-path or lane. Trees in back ground. Enter Hagar Lot at* L, *a dark faced handsome Gipsy girl in a neatly*

fitting and attractive though wild appearing costume. Liper following.

HAGAR. I will detain you but a moment, Liper, but I want you to do me a service and thereby to earn my kindest thoughts and best wishes for you, Liper. I beg it of you as a deep and everlasting favor. Will you deny me, Liper?

LIPER. [*Hearty earnest tone.*] Hagar, I'll give my life for you.

HAGAR. [*Taking his hand.*] It is simply and only this, Liper. You have been always kind to that child whom I left with the Daddy, while the Daddy and the Grannam have at all times been cruelly unkind to her, so much so that her little body could bear no more, and she, as you already know, made a frantic but futile effort to escape, notwithstanding your strenuous exertions in her behalf. On the whole it is well that you failed, but I ask you in future to keep watch over her, snatch her from ill usage, and save her from death should it ever come near to her. You will know how to do this and yet live as you always have lived. You will not refuse me, Liper?

LIPER. I will do as you desire, Hagar, even though it costs me life itself.

HAGAR. Thank you Liper. I can depend on you, and now farewell for the present. Go and tell Daddy Windy that I want him instantly. [*Liper shakes her hand, kisses it, and exits* L. *Hagar paces the stage thoughtfully until the entrance of Daddy, which is almost instantly, from* L.]

DADDY. [*In a tone of inquiry.*] Well Hagar, my dusky flower o' the dell, you commanded and I am here?

HAGAR. [*Sternly.*] You did well to retake that child today, for although you saw me not, yet I was close at hand, but has the bonny wild buck become a wolf? Has the eagle changed to a vulture? Has the quiet, wise owl been transformed likewise into the savage kite? You and the Grannam were shamefully rough in your dealings with that child to-day.

DADDY. [*Cringing mein.*] Hagar, my 'ood-wi'let. I saw the bird fly away, an' I was eager to catch it before it got away altogether. In my flurry, I was, perhaps, too rough with the chick, pooty little pet, I am wery sorry, my blossom—wery sorry. 'Twarn't my fault—'twas my weakness.

HAGAR. [*Waving her hand and her aspect of countenance peculiarly fierce.*] Enough, Daddy. I have a weakness, too, you know. It will not do for your weakness and mine to clash. Listen to me, Daddy, and heedfully too.

DADDY. I will,my blooming fox-glove.

HAGAR. When I brought this child to you I told you your part would be to bring her up as if she were your own—to look after her and care for her kindly too—until some day she may be claimed by those who can pay you liberally. That may be never; but if it ever should come the sum must be large indeed which

those who seek her would refuse to pay. [*Very sternly.*] How, sir, have you obeyed my commands?

DADDY. [*Somewhat defiantly.*] But Hagar, 'ooman, s'po'sin I was talking all alone to myself and I should say—'member I say only s'posin—Here's a kinchin for you, pardner, 'vich you never axed for, which vill cost a prec'ous sight more to keep than your own self. You never vas axed vether you vould take charge of it, but you 'ad your breath knocked out of yer body by being informed that you must take it an' keep it for yeers an' yeers, vith a promis' o' payment on some thirty-second day of December in the year ten thousand and eleventeen, about a yeer arter the last man has driven hiss'f out o' his min' an' inter a whirlpool—though ter be sure the party did intimate that you might occasionally see the color of sum suv'rings—but never a ha'penny yet. That's what I say my black daliah.

HAGAR. [*Slowly and emphatically.*] If you refuse to do what I ask of you, how far do you think your life will extend into the next century? Will you live until the end of this week, even?

DADDY. [*Suddenly trembling and resuming his old cringing manner.*] I—I—know—I know, Queen of the Starlight race, that you have received the secret of death-dealing or life-giving from the most ancient 'ooman of our tribe! I know't—I know't! I'm avake—vide, stark, staring avake! Vot do you vant me to do? I'll do it.

[*Hagar draws from her pocket a small canvas bag and pours into the palm of her hand a portion of its contents—bright golden coins. Daddy with a look of intense avarice draws near to her with a stealthily, crouching movement and is about to spring upon Hagar.*]

HAGAR. [*Suddenly whips out a long slender bladed knife.*] Stay where you are, Daddy. Stay where you are my man. [*Daddy trembling fearfully.*] I know you would hesitate at no crime—*if safe to you*—to gratify your avarice, but if I were to scratch you with the point of this knife not all the King's physicians could save you from the jaws of death! (*Then in a calm quiet tone*) Daddy you see these golden pieces [*tapping them with her knife—he nods eagerly.*] They have been given to me for the keep of this child. I intend to hand them over to you. [*He takes a few steps nearer to her, but she raises her knife and checks him.*] But I propose to give them to you by degrees for the keep and proper treatment of this child.

DADDY. [*Gibbering.*] Why—why—why—w—w—w—why not all at once? Why not? Save so much time, my heath blossom!

HAGAR. [*Firmly.*] I will pay you when satisfied that you have acted toward the little disowned as I wish you to do. I offer you two ways of payment. This, if you do as I bid you [*holding up the gold*]. This, if you dont [*holding up the knife.*]

DADDY. [*Trembling.*] W-w-w-w-w-what do you—w—w—w—wan! me to do?

HAGAR. I placed that child in your hands. I shall some day take it from you again; meantime, I expect you to treat it kindly.

DADDY. [*Suggestively.*] Make a little lady on it?

HAGAR. [*Impatiently*] Nothing of the kind. Bring it up how you like; make it do anything to help you live. I care not what; but no blows, no rough words, no pinching, no starving. All the rest I leave to you.

DADDY. (*Eagerly.*) Then you dont vant me to make a lady o' the flower?

HAGAR. I do not. She has been bred so far in poverty; let her remain so, but mark me, Daddy, if the Grannam attempts to be cruel to this wild blossom, I will hold you to account and punish you for it.

DADDY. O' course, I knows that. I've allers bin punished for the old 'oomans doin's. I could'nt ask you to stop it by givin' her a scratch vith the pint o' that ere knife o' your'n, in part payment for the kinchin there. I could'nt, could I? For! if such a haccident vas to 'appen, 'an the head of the ole bulrush vas to fall, I don't think—mind, I say I don't think—I should ask for any more payment for may-blossom there.

HAGAR. [*Laconically.*] We understand each other? [*Going.*]

DADDY. Vell, if 'aving yer own vay is onderstandin' yer, o' course I does.

HAGAR. [*Turning.*] Very well, then, remember my life hangs upon hers. If her star shoots to the earth, mine will fall too, and I shall perish. But I must live—live to satisfy the yearnings of hate! I must live for revenge—for vengeance! Do not, therefore, you, Daddy, harm a hair of this child's head, or do one thing to endanger her life. If you do, the lightning stroke, which cuts down the strong oak as if it were frail reed, will not be swifter than the descent of this knife, guided by my hand, to your body, even though I fall dead in striking the blow. Farewell until we meet again. [*Exits at* R.]

DADDY. [*Looking after her.*] Vich I cert'ly 'opes vill be never no more—never no more. Let 'er go—she's like a nettle blossom—werry pooty to the eye; but she stings yer fingers if yer touches her. Hagar's a' norful 'ooman, a' norful 'ooman.

GRANNAM *enters hurriedly from* L.

GRANNAM. Hurry up ole man o' all, hurry up. C'loriform dont las' forever. The brat is wakin' up. Come quick.

DADDY. I'll come, my Diana. I'm coming, but remember arter this to speak kindly to that kinchin, or Doctor Ashplant [*shaking his stick significantly at her*] vill be thinkin' yer needs a dose o' vissick, 'an yer does'ent like vissick, do's yer, my Diana? She musn't be licked or knocked about, for she's the werry little article as vould lay herself to soak to death in a mill-pond. Do you understand me, Diana? [*Both exit quickly at* L.]

SCENE III. *A bare and cheerless attic; door on* R *and* L; *two or three old and broken chairs in the room; at back, a table; on it an old broken looking glass and a junk bottle, in which is stuck a piece of lighted candle; near center, back, a window open. Stage darkened.*

[*Enter at* L. GRANNAM *followed by Daddy who carries rather than leads Floret, who is struggling and crying angrily; Daddy forces her to sit in a chair.*]

GRANNAM. [*Harshly.*] Now old man o' all, I hope yer satisfied, now yer got 'er back. She needs a good basting, an' I'll gi' 'er one, too, afore long—I'll——

DADDY. [*Going towards her.*] Hush, yer lolly-gab old 'ooman [*angrily*] or I'll gi' yer a dose o' phissick, you old hag, so look out an' keep yer tongue in out o' the cold. [*Goes to Floret who is sobbing upon the back of the chair; sits by her side.*] Now do be [*coaxingly*] quiet, my primrose, my rose of the walley, my night blooming cereus. If you will stop crying an' be quiet an' good, you shall go down to Ascot to-morrow an' be dressed like a fairy princess.

FLORET. [*Suddenly.*] Daddy will you promise [*looks at him searchingly*] faithfully—[*earnestly*] faithfully promise me, that I shall, if I stop with you, dress like a fairy princess? If you will, why [*dryly*] I'll—I'll see.

DADDY. [*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes, my little doe of the dell. Promise you faithfully? o' course I will. I'll *promise* you anything if you'll only be a good an' obejent primrose, and never [*hypocritically*] run away from poor old Daddy again. [*Looking towards Grannam.*] I'll make a lady on her, I vill, my Diana.

GRANNAM. [*Snapishly.*] Your'e growin' foolish an' sappy old man of all, an' you'll make a fool o' Floret a'fore you're done vith 'er.

DADDY, [*To Floret.*] Vy, booty, you dont know vot you vos running from ven you tried to run away from me. Vy, you run away from a real 'ord [*Floret looks at him eagerly*] who vos very much took up vith you. Yes, he said you had a' mazing pooty face, and a werry sweet woice, for he heerd you sing vile you vos a voshin' your pooty little feet, an' ven he saw you again he vos goin' to gi' yer some money.

FLORET. [*Impatiently.*] I dont want his money; I hate his money; [*aside*] but I like him ever and ever so much. (*Then to Daddy.*) Did you hear me Daddy? (*Vehemently.*) I say I *hate* his money.

DADDY. (*Greedily.*). But 'ere is a party who could a' put up vith jest as much on it as he vanted to get rid on, they vos all bright new goolden suv'rins as he brought out o' his veskit-pocket. Varnt they, my Diana? (*She grunts assent.*) Ah! the sight o' them made my fingers ache, too, as if the'd just bin an' caught the reumatics. I 'eld out my 'and for half a pint on 'em if he felt like givin' them away, but he didn't seem to let go on 'em.

He wanted to give 'em to you, Floret; he vanted to see you again, and he said he hoped he should.

FLORET. [*Pleased.*] O, did he, Daddy, did he—did he say so, Daddy? Oh! I'm so glad. (*Twisting about joyfully.*)

DADDY. Yes; an' he said he vanted to see you in a better dress. An' he vould give a handful of money to see you in fine clothes, for he vos sure you would look like a booty then.

FLORET. (*Musingly.*) Ah! me I wish he had seen me in fine clothes instead of those soiled and ragged ones; (*suddenly*) but I would'nt touch his money. I'd throw it in his face. I'd (*pauses thoughtfully*) O, no, I wouldn't, either, because that would be rude, and he was so kind to me; (*determinedly*) but I would refuse to take it, though.

DADDY. So ve vent in search on you to bring you to 'im, and a pretty blessed run on it, to catch you, ve've had ever since. (*Sneeringly.*) O' course the young lord aint a stoppin' in the 'ood now, and o' course, through your vilfulness, youv'e been an' gone an' lost a toppin' chance o' making a heap o' money.

FLORET. (*Archly.*) But we may see him again, Daddy. (*Aside.*) O! I hope I shall.

DADDY. Yes, my lily o' the walley, an' so ve may, preraps, see two Sundays come together in vou veek; but the odds are ve shall not. But never mind, never mind, my vite crocus, ve shall get on wery vell arter this little spin, I dessay. (*Rising.*) Now you jes' wait 'ere, my little spring floweret, a minute or two. Yer vont (*doubtingly*) run avay again, vill yer, for yer knows I'm goin' to dress yer like a little fairy princess.

FLORET. O, no, Daddy, (*earnestly*) I wont run away now.

DADDY. No, I knowed it; yer wouldn't leave yer poor old Daddy again. I'll be back in a minute, floweret. (*To Grannam.*) Come along, old 'ooman. (*Grannam shakes her fist at Floret. Daddy pushes her. Both exit at* R.)

FLORET. O, no, I wont try to run away now, (*rising,*) for Liper is not here now, and without him it would be useless; but he will follow me and find out where I am, to shield and protect me, I know. (*Thoughtfully.* I wonder if I shall always be a poor, ragged girl. (*Earnestly.*) O, I would like good clothes, and be clean and nice. I would work *so* hard if I only could. (*Suddenly.*) I dont believe I am that old man's child, although he says I am, or he wouldn't make me sell flowers, and let me be beaten by that old woman; but he's grown mighty good all at once. I dont understand it. (*Trying to remember.*) Sometimes I seem to remember—a wild stormy night, a dark looking woman, and a—another—a nice, well-dressed lady, and I kneeling at her feet, crying and sobbing, and then—and then it all goes away; but it must have been a dream. O, how I do wish I could remember it all, for the lady was so splendidly dressed, and I have dreamed of playing with lots of little girls and boys. (*Joyous expression.*) It was so nice. I wish I could dream it all the time, it was *so* jolly.

Enter Daddy, dancing and rubbing his hands.

DADDY. (*Chuckling*). My vite rose blossom, ve may be 'appy yet. I've jest thought of a vay to get 'old o' some goolden suv-rins, jest a few; and do you know vot I'll do vith 'em?

FLORET. (*Listlessly*) No.

DADDY. Guess.

FLORET. (*Peevishly.*) I dont want to guess; it would trouble me.

DADDY, Then I'll jest tell you vot I'll do vith that money—or same as it—I'll buy some bootiful flowers made o' muslin, all painted and colored, jest like the real thing, on'y they vont fade and die as the nat'ral vones does. Vell, you shall make yourself a pooty wreath o' them to twist round your bootiful head, my peach blossom; and then I'll buy you some splendid blue stuff for a frock—light blue, vith silver stars upon it, eh!

FLORET. [*Jumps about, clapping her hands.*] Oh, how lovely!

DADDY. Yes, yes; an' you shall 'ave a pooty little cloak—a scarlet cloak—Little Red Riding Hood. [*Laughs and rubs his hands, while Floret expresses her delight in the most extravagant manner.*] Ho! ho! ho! A Little Red Riding Hood. And then I'll buy some ra'al woolen stockings to keep the little legs warm; and then my sweet-smellin' mayflower shall have on its little ten toes a pair o' slippers made o' kid, ra'al kid, none o' yer common calf skin, but ra'al, pooty blue kid. [*Floret has been continually acting her delight.*]

FLORET. [*Joyful anticipation.*] Oh, Daddy, what makes you so good?

DADDY. Yes, an' ven your'e dressed jest like a furrin princess or a fairy angel ve'll go down to Ascot to the races, an' you shall sing to the svells, an' they vill give you suv'rins an' bank notes, as much as ever you can carry; and when that young lord—

FLORET. [*Childish delight.*] Victor! shall we see Victor?

DADDY. [*Not understanding.*] Victory! O' course ve shall be victors; an' be rich an' ride in carriages, like hurls and dookes. Ha! ha! Floret, ve shall all be 'appy yet. An' the old 'ooman has gone for yer fixins to-night, to make yer a forrin princess to-morrow. [*Dances.*]

FLORET. [*Jumps about; laughing joyously.*] O, we shall go to the races, and I shall see him, dressed just like a forrin princess. [*Clapping her hands.*] But I say, Daddy, [*abruptly,*] it wont take old Grannam long to get them, will it? I'd like to see them.

Enter Grannam at L, *with bundle, and throws it violently at Floret, who quickly falls upon her knees and tugs excitedly to break the tough cord which binds it.*

GRANNAM. [*Angrily.*] There, now, you little beggar, I hope your'e satisfied now the old man has made a fool of—— *Daddy quickly covers her mouth with his hand, pushes her roughly into a chair. Grannam sputters and spits.*]

FLORET. [*Defiantly.*] I aint a beggar, you ugly old woman; and some day I am going to be a fine lady. [*Tugs wildly at the*

bundle.] I say; why dont you break! Why dont you come open, you ugly bundle? [*Jumps up and runs excitedly round the room, tossing things over and aside.*] Give me a knife, quick, somebody! quick! quick! give me a knife! O, where's a knife! [*Runs back to the bundle and tears the paper clear.*] O, I've got you now [*Exultingly*] you ugly thing. [*Pulls out the articles described as her dress below, except the flowers are loose.*] Oh! Oh! aint those splendid. Daddy, your'e so good now I dont understand it. I'll put them on right away. [*Hugs them and kisses them, then drops them on the floor, and is about to loosen her dress.*] O, my! right [*pausing*] before you and Grannam. [*Seriously,*] O, no, that wouldn't be proper. [*Thinking.*] But I know; I'll be right back [*Picks the clothes up—going*] I m going to the races dressed [*joyously*] just like a furrin princess. [*Exit at* R.]

DADDY. [*Decisively.*] Now, old 'ooman, dont you speak cross to the vite rose any more; its the wrong game with that kinchin; if you blows her up she vont do nothin', but cut and run agin the first openin she sees. If you coaxes her I dessay she'll do all ve'll ask her to do. You know, my Diana, how much a kind word does with you. You knows, my London pride, it allers vent agin my 'art to rub you down with Dr. Ashplant's emberkation, an' you allers said you felt yourself much vorse after the dose than afore it vos administered, eh, my Diana, now didnt you? [*She gives a significant grunt of assent.*] O' course you did. Vell Floret vill be a better child by coaxing than she vill by jawing her or pushing or pounding her; so you must coaxe her, my peony; coaxe her, because if there is no vite rose there can't be no Jamaker to squench your thirst, as was weaned on salt fish. Do yer see, flowering black shrub; do yer see?

GRANNAM. She's a norful wixin. I sees that, [*impatiently*] an' I sees that the older she get the greater the trouble she's likely to be to us.

DADDY. Pe-raps, pe-raps, but the greater the profit she'll be, my fancy root o' the garden.

GRANNAM. [*Grumbling.*] Dont see it, dont see it; she vants 'er own vay too much.

DADDY. [*Decisively.*] An' she shall 'ave it, an' she shall 'ave it. You jest be quiet, my sprig o' mint, you jest be quiet and leave it all to me. Youve' only to go an' do all I tell you, and ve shall be all right. Your thirst will never want for Jamaker to squench it.

Enter Eloret gaily. She is dressed in an ill-fitting blue cambric dress; it is dotted entirely over with silver stars; on her legs a pair of blue yarn coarse stockings, and on her feet purple kid slippers; on her head a wreath of made flowers.

DADDY. [*Rubbing his hands and digging Grannam, who is gazing at her in disgust.*] Here's a sweet and pooty bowpot (*flatteringly*) all a blowin' and a growin'.

FLORET. Ah! dont I look nice (*surveying herself*) such a

splendifferous dress and these magnificent, cunning little shoes. (*Looking towards the glass*). O I know what I'll do. (*Jumps about laughing merrily.*] I'll go and look at Floret in the glass. [*Runs to the glass and losses her head coquettishly.*] O, you didn't think, [*pointing to the figure,*] did you, that you was going to be a forrin princess. [*Laughing and shaking her head.*] No, I know you didn't. You didn't think you was going to Ascot tomorrow and see Victor; no, you didn't think that either; but perhaps he wont speak to you, so you needn't feel so good. No, no; keep cool, Floret, keep cool, because—

DADDY. [*Impatiently.*] Come, come, thou lily of the walley, my eye-bright, my primrose, I want to talk to you. Clear out, old 'ooman—go! [*Exit Grannam, shaking her head and fist at Floret.*]

FLORET. [*Going.*] O, yes, Daddy; [*pauses hesitatingly,*] ah! now, Daddy, just one more look. [*Runs back.*] Here I am again, Floret; I wanted to see how you was getting along in your cooling—

DADDY. Come here, Floret, my sunbeam, my starlight, my daffadowndilly; come here; now do come and talk to its poor old Daddy.

FLORET. [*Going.*] O, yes, Daddy, [*Looking regretfully,*] but I do wish I could— [*Turns.*] Ah! Daddy. [*Starts.*]

DADDY. [*Out of patience.*] Come, come. [*She runs up to him and puts the wreath on his head, points at him, jumps about, and laughs merrily.*)

DADDY. (*Knuckles on his knees and grinning foolishly.*) Sixteen bunches a pennee, sixteen bunches a pennee, sweet lavenders. (*The wreath sliding off his head. As it does so she catches it and places it upon her own, glancing at him with a curiously proud triumphant air, as if demanding from him an opinion which she disdained to ask.*)

DADDY. It is a booty, a ra'al silver belled hy'cinth! O, ve shall all on us float on a stream o' silver, in a goolden boat I see! an' snowdrop shall sing to us, an' read out o' fairy books, an' captivate a young lord!

FLORET. (*Musingly.*) A young lord?

DADDY. (*Gleefully*) Half a dozen of them, my daffadowndilly. Ah! half a score o' such as them.

FLORET. (*Thoughtfully.*) No, I should like only one to be mine, mine, Daddy, to be mine only—to love me, and like me, as I should love and like him, Daddy.

DADDY. All a blowin' and a growin'; softly and fair goes far, my snow-star. Ye must toddle afore ye gallops. You see, my pearl o' daisies, I've kept my promise vith you. You've got a frock such as vould make a princess go out of her mind if she had to wear it, an' stockings, an' slippers—fairy slippers, like Cinderella's—(*coaxingly*) Daddy has spent a heap o' goolden suv'rins to buy all these bootiful things for his voodbine and vild rose flower, an' ven he's been an' gone an done all these wery good an' kind things for her, (*anxiously,*) she aint a goin' to floor him by turning sulky, is she?

FLORET. (*Readily.*) Oh, no, no, Daddy.

DADDY. 'Cos if little birds vont sing ven they ort to sing they vont captiwate princes and young lords.

FLORET. (*Eagerly.*) Oh, I will sing, Daddy, I will, indeed. Indeed I will. (*Entreatingly.*) But dont let the Grannam come too. (*Decisively.*) I will never speak to Grannam any more.

DADDY. (*Wheedling tone.*) The bile makes all on us cross, an' the Grannam's had the bile wery bad, an' ven ve're cross ve should take phissick. I've given Grannam *her* physic. A wery strong dose—An she's better now, she's wery umble an' wery sorry.

FLORET. I do not care for her sorrow. I will not speak to her any more—and now, Daddy, I will go and get my flowers ready for tomorrow. (*Exit* R).

DADDY. (*Going to the window and looking out.*) It'll be a bootiful day to-morrow, and the Vite Rose 'll keep her vord. I think I knows vere to plant her to make the most tin in the least time. To-morrow's to do it. To-morrow! I've heerd say that to-morrow's the day as never kim yet! Vell, ve shall soon know. I'll make my Diana tell my fortin' vith the cards 'fore ve an' the rats commence a scrummage for the night. She can see out o' von eye, an' she'll tell me vot's a comin' to me to-morrow. To-morrow! (*Hand upon his heart*). I dun no, but somehow I feels a load upon my 'art ven I 'eers myself say to-morrow.

(*Exits at* R.)

SCENE IV. *Front of stage; Out-door scenery; Enter a crowd of race course people* (*swells*) *including a pool selling Auctioneer and two assistants, one of whom bears a card on a pole. The card is printed in large letters with the names of the horses which are to race, as follows :*

"Coup de Grace," "The Little Pet," "Lightning," "Thunder Cloud," "Noflies," and "Bay Greenspecs." While the Auctioneer is arranging matters, the crowd is busily engaged in making outside bets as follows—"Seven to four on the field, bar one!" "Four to one against Coup de Grace!" "Seven to one against The Little Pet." "Done!" "A pony even between Lightning and Thunder Cloud, one to start—Lightning for choice!" "A thousand to twenty against Noflies." "Done!" "I'll pay the odds against the favorite!" "Six to four against the Bay Greenspecs!" "I'll take you." "Done." "Have it again?"—and so on. This scene must be lively and exciting—money changes hands freely. A little boy is running about crying out—"Cigar lights, only ha'pence each, Gents."

AUCTIONEER. [*Standing on a stool.*] Now, gentlemen, if you will give me your attention I will offer you the thing in a legitimate manner. [*They crowd about.*] As you are all aware, gentlemen, we are obliged to assemble in this out-of-the-way and uncomfortable place because of that high-toned morality of the present day which prevents the selling of pools upon the track or within the grounds—a most unjust discrimination, allow me to observe, gents—[*Applause.*] But that is neither here nor there, for I'm going to start 'em right away. I'll sell 'em any way you like, gentlemen.

How much am I offered for the first choice? There they are—[*Points to card and calls the names over.*] There's the "Little Pet"—she's a stayer, gents. In fact they are all bound to win. How much? Start 'em along. How much for first choice?

[High bids are made, the pool is sold, the assistant taking the money and returning written tickets. The urging by the seller and the bids by the crowd are repeated again and again; the style of pool being varied each time continues sufficiently long to set the next scene. At last a bell is loudly rung behind the scenes, when, with cries and yells of "They're off," "They're off," all exit on the run at R. The performers taking part in this scene should acquaint themselves thoroughly with the customs and methods of pool selling. During the selling the Marquis has entered, and gazes upon them with curiosity, occasionally making a bid, and having it given to him by name. After all exit he remains, with other people passing and repassing, and wandering listlessly.]

MARQUIS. [*Musingly.*] Well, what a set of maniacs they are' to be sure.

Enter LORD NIHILALBUM *heated and excited, from* R.

LORD N. [*Dressed as a fop and using eye-glasses.*] By Jove! I'm joothed glad I've met you, Wethchethtaw. I've been in the confoundeth thate of mind you can conthieve. Of cowath the Marthioneth hath retawned to the cawaige?

MARQUIS. [*Tartly.*] Of course her ladyship has done no such thing. What do you mean, Nihilalbum? Her ladyship quitted the carriage i your charge; where is she?

LORD N. Thath jeth it. That ith jetht what I can't pothibly underthtand. We thtwolled down the coath; I met the Earl of Brackleigh—

MARQUIS. (*Interrupting with jealousy.*) The Earl of Brackleigh, you say? [*Eagerly.*] Well, did Lady Westchester go away with him?

LORD N. O, no, we only nodded to each other, and I turned to Lady Wethchethtaw to mention a pleasant little matter, and by Jove! I couldn't find her. She had dithappeared, and I could not discovaw a twace of haw.

MARQUIS. [*Angrily.*] This is a singular affair—a most offensively unpleasant event. You, Nihilalbum, return to the carriage, and I will seek elsewhere. I fear she may have been subjected to some insult.

LORD N. [*Going.*] By Jove! I cannot conceal from myself that the whole thing is verwy wemarkable and confoundedly thtwange. [*Exit at* R.]

MARQUIS. [*Stopping two grooms in livery.*] Lady Westchester in promenading the course has by some mischance been separated from her friend. Proceed up and down the course, and should you observe her ladyship alone, conduct her to the carriage; should she not be alone, come and inform me at once of her whereabouts.

[*Grooms making their salutations, exit. Marquis pacing the stage excitedly.*] The Earl of Brackleigh. *Mutteringly.*] The Earl of Brackleigh. [*Jealously.*] His attentions to my wife are insufferable. Wife? She is no wife except in name. I love her to my soul's perdition, but she scorns me and tramples me under her foot. Spurns me and hates me—I, the proudest man in England. I have never dared to lay my hand on her even in pleasantry since the priest pronounced the words which should have, but did not, made us man and wife. Oh, I am convinced that I am right. [*Determinedly.*] I will not rest until I have discovered the truth or falsity of the suspicion which is burning my breast as if a fire were raging there. If my doubts are realized I will not spare him, at least. But I must be calm, calm to all outward appearance. [*Exit at* B.]

SCENE V. *Stage light. Open spot in the midst of woods. A large entrance at back* C, *oval in shape, composed of branches and vines interwoven; through this entrance is seen in the far background portions of a race course and the judges' stand, around which are gathered a lot of men gesticulating eagnestly. Enter Constance and groom simultaneously from opposite directions.*

PEACOCK. (*Breathless from running.*) My Lo—my Lord Marquis fears that your ladyship has been unable to find the carriage, and—.

CONSTANCE. O, Peacock! (*with a gleam of pleasure*) I am glad to find some one to conduct me to the carriage. I have been so distressed at not being able to find it. (*Going at* C.)

(*Enter Lord Nihilalbum and Marquis.*)

LORD N. Oh, Oh, Lady Wethchethtaw. (*Marquis has turned his back with a mortified air.*) O, upon my honaw, I am delighted to see you again.

CONSTANCE. Not more delighted than I am, Nihilalbum; (*coldly*;) you precipitated me into a most unpleasant position.

LORD N. Weally, Lady Wethchethtaw, I cannot imagine how we became thepawated. It was the work of a moment. I believe a wude thcoundwel pathed between uth, and the next instant you had dithappeared.

CONSTANCE. At least *you* had, my Lord. However, I could hardly have expected that your Lordship would keep your eyes constantly fixed upon me, (*addressing Marquis, sarcasm,*) but I *did* expect that Lord Westchester would have accompanied me, and by his attention have prevented the possibility of my being placed in so unusual, so dangerous, so embrarrassing a predicament.

MARQUIS. (*Turning.*) I am glad to see (*hoarsely*) your ladyship safely back again. Your ladyship's absence (*biting sarcasm*) has been the source of some anxiety to myself; but perhaps I ought to feel gratified that your ladyship has escaped, in your

wanderings, the insults of low persons, though fortunately commanding the attentions of an individual with whom your ladyship was formerly on more intimate terms than of late years.

CONSTANCE. (*Curls her lip scornfully.*) I have been subjected to considerable inconvenience by the carelessness, not intentional I admit, of Lord Nihilalbum (*Icy bitterness,*) and by your lordship's own indifference.

MARQUIS. (*Grandly.*) Indifference, Madam!

CONSTANCE. (*Shrugs her shoulders and laughs sarcastically.*) Indifference, I said, my Lord,

[FLORET *sings song—introduced behind the scenes.*]

LORD N. (*Looking out at* C.] Haw! Haw! Haw! (*Uses glasses.*) Pothitively the vewy newetht thing afloat—haw! haw! haw! Weally! Wethtchethtaw, but she things thweetly. Come here 'ittle vagrant.

[*Enter* FLORET, *dressed in her best, followed by the* DADDY—*she is still singing and carries at her left side a basket of flowers. Constance observes her and becomes extremely agitated.*]

MARQUIS. Lady Westchester, pray observe yonder extraordinary child?

CONSTANCE. (*Pale—looking in wrong direction.*] What child?

MARQUIS. You are looking in the wrong direction, Lady Westchester. I allude to yonder theatrically dressed girl, who has just been singing with such remarkable taste and sweetness. [*Constance displays extreme agitation, but with a mighty effort fastens her eyes upon Floret.*] What a singularly pretty child; quite a little aristocrat among plebians, I declare.

FLORET. *Tendering Constance a boquet.* Please accept these flowers, lady. (*Constance waves them aside.*) O pray take them lady. (*Earnestly.*)

LORD N. Pway acthept the thmall bouquet. Lady Wethtchehtaw, its a doothed lame eggthample of the floweth of fanthy or art; but then the little cweethaw who offerths it ith quite unique. Nothing like haw to-day at Athcot, that I've theen, eh, Wethtchethtaw?

MARQUIS, You are right, Nihilalbum. The little creature is unique. Do not disdain her little offering, Lady Westchester. *Constance takes it and throws it one side, opens her purse, takes out a piece of money and tosses it into Floret's basket. Floret throws her head back, prodly and defiantly picks the money from among the flowers and throws it at Constance's feet.*

MARQUIS. (*Aside.*] My God! What similiarity in expression. (*Gazing earnestly at Floret and back to Constance.*)

CONSTANCE. (*Starting.*) Why do you toss back my gift, child?

FLORET. [*Gazing earnestly and fixedly upon her.*] I will not take your money. lady. [*Slowly.*]

MARQUIS. Why will you not take the money of this lady?

FLORET. [*Hesitatingly.*] I do not know—because I wont, I suppose.

MARQUIS. [*Persistently.*] But you must have a reason.

CONSTANCE. [*Scornfully.*] If you have a reason, child, state it and relieve the solicitude of this gentleman.

FLORET. [*Half proudly, half timidly.*] I have one reason. I have seen you—seen you, lady, many, many times.

CONSTANCE. [*Laughs angrily.*] Absurd.

MARQUIS. Where have you seen this lady so many times?

FLORET. [*Gazing wistfully at Constance.*] In my dreams, sir, only in my dreams; but then I saw the face of this lady so plain, so very plain, just as I see it now; but still it looked kinder and gentler to me than it did when the lady flung her money at me, it kissed me, and—

LORD N. Haw! haw! haw! Weally; I've heard that thethe little peple are taught all kinds of lying thtorieth, but I never came acwoth anything of thith kind befaw. It ith weally pwepothtewouthly new. And though thith lady kithed you many thimeth, eh, little—a— little—a little Awiel? [*Floret stands silently looking upon him with lofty scorn—the Lady laughs relievedly.*] What, you wont anthaw me? Haw! ha! ha! I never wath tho amuthed; thow, little Awiel lookth cwoth upon me—haw! haw! I thouldn't wondaw now, but if I were to offaw you a pieth of gold, that you would anthaw me that you had theen me in youaw dweamth, and I had kithed you many timeth, eh? [*Tendering her a sovereign.*]

FLORET. [*Angrily stamping.*] I wont take any money from you! [*Daddy writhes.*]

LORD N. Haw! haw! I thought tho. It ith coming round ath I pwognothticated it would, Lady Wethtchethtaw—aw! aw!—why will you not take money from me, aw, little vagwant Awiel?

FLORET. [*Passionately.*] Because I hate you, that's why,

LORD N. Haw! haw! the witcheth thing pothhible, the vewy witchetht thing afloat—haw! haw! And, pway, why do you hate me—aw—aw, little flower elf?

FLORET. [*Flushed and angered.*] Because you are a fool—a foppish, lisping fool.

DADDY. [*Beyond control.*] Vite Rose, my precious little sprig o' sweet-briar, dont go a cussin' the svell in that vay; speak pooty to him, my daisy, and he'll chuck you a pound as soon as look at yer. [*Turning.*] Aseoose the child, sir, my lord, she aint quite used to perlite serciety, sir, my lord; but she's a wery—

CONSTANCE. Pardon me, my lord, but I'm fatigued by all this nonsense, and if you will give me your arm I will take a turn upon the course.

LORD N. Aw—with infinite playthaw, Lady Wethtchethtaw.

MARQUIS. I will attend you, Lady Westchester, if your ladyship [*decidedly*] will favor me by granting me a moment's patience.

CONSTANCE. (*Bows assent.*) We will await your convenience, my Lord Marquis. [*Going.*]

DADDY. [*To Lord N., eagerly.*] You vont go away, sir, my lord, vithout gi vin' the little Vite Rose harnsel, vill you? Out o' her proud 'art she vent and chucked that there lady her goold back again, as you seed—chucked von screamin' chance avay. Give the little sprig o' lilac suthen to remember you by my noble sportsman.

LORD N. [*Laughing, draws a handful of sitver from his pocket, throws it into Floret's basket. She casts upon him a glance in which disdain, dislike and contumely are commingled. The Daddy shakes his fist at her threateningly.*]

LORD N. [*Picking a bunch from her basket and staring her hard in the face.*] Verwy odd, cuwiothly thtwange that I should not have nothithed what a joothed lovely countenanth the little cwethaw hath. What a thplendid guwall she will be in anathaw two or three ye-awth. I mutht put my gwoom on to thith old man, who theemth to thpeak the language of flowoth, and learn moaw about the guwall. I pothitively must.

[*Exit Constance and Lord N. at* C *to* R.]

MARQUIS. [*Condescendingly*] What is your name, my little maid?

FLORET. The Poor Girl!

MARQUIS. [*Passing his hand over his forehead.*] The Poor Girl; I seem to have heard that name before, yet I cannot recollect where. The expression is common and I suppose it is that which makes it familiar to me. You have another name besides the appellation you have mentioned?

FLORET. (*Decisively.*) I have not,

DADDY. [*Quickly.*] Axept Floret—axept Floret, my lord, I named her Floweret ven fust ve had her, for she vas as pooty as floweret as ever bloomed on God's 'arth, but my old 'ooman vould cut it short, an' call it Floret. I'm veak vith my old 'ooman, my noble lord, I am, an' in this ere trifle I let her 'ave just her own way.

MARQUIS. But that child is not your own daughter? She cannot be.

DADDY. Very vell, my noble sportsman. [*Grinning*] I s'pose you know best; but if she isn't a blossom o' my bough, she aint a bud o' nobody else's, an' she ain't a going to be.

MARQUIS. (*Soliloquizing.*) I cannot believe it. That child, wretched as her present position is, has no trace, no taint of the plebian in her. Strange—strange, the striking resemblance to Lady Westchester in the face of this remarkably beautiful vagrant? (*Starts with suspicion.*) O my God! my God! Am I mad that such a thought should cross my brain. [*Exit* C.]

DADDY. Ravin', aint he Floret? Vell, ve'll jis lay round ere' till arter the race, ven ve'll pull the suv rins out o' the swells. [*Floret is standing at* C, *looking towards* L.]

FLORET. [*Jumps about, laughs, claps her hands.*] O, here he comes, here he comes, walking real fast and he'll have to go right by here, we'll see if he will pass and not speak to me. [*Decisively*] I guess not. [*Runs towards front.*]

[*Enter* VICTOR *hurriedly.*]

VICTOR. Here, I say old man, have you seen the Marquis of Westchester pass this way? (*Floret looks over her shoulder nervously.*)

DADDY. He's just gone this minute my lord, jes gone. (*Lays out at full length, lights his pipe, and presently falls asleep.*)

VICTOR. [*Quickly.*] Oh, all right, all right, I merely wanted to— [*Going.*]

FLORET. [*Over her shoulder archly.*] Ha—hem! ha—hem.

VICTOR. Oh, by jove! there she is. [*Goes to her, shakes her hand heartily.*] I say, my little girl, do you remember Trentham Wood—The rudeness of an ignorant cub.—A small boquet of flowers, and—and—

FLORET. [*Embarrassed.*] Yes—Yes—Sir—my Lord. I do not know what to call you. I should be very, very sorry to offend you.

VICTOR. (*Low tone.*) Call me Victor whenever we are alone; (*Floret is very joyous, turns her back and rubs her hands and seems hardly able to contain herself. Occasionally glancing at him cunningly*) because we shall be sure to meet again, but whatever you think best before people. These are garden flowers, those you gave me were wild flowers. I think them quite as pretty as these. I have them still, (*Tries to look into her face.*) And I have thought of you every day. You do not speak.

FLORET. (*Pressing her hands together.*) I—I cannot. I do not know what to say.

VICTOR. At least you can sing. I should like to hear you sing that song which you sung, and which sounded so beautifully in Trentham Wood. Sing the second verse—no; that is, commence at the beginning and sing the whole.

FLORET. (*Quickly.*) Would you like to hear me sing?

VICTOR. O, so very much, (*hurriedly*) indeed I should. That is why I asked you. (*Looking over his shoulder at the Daddy.*) There is a gift for you—for you alone; make use of it for my sake. (*Gives her a package.*) Now sing, please.

FLORET. O, thank you. (*Puts it in her bosom.* I will treasure it forever. (*Sings.*)

O, oranges, sweet oranges,
Pulpy cheeks that peep through trees,
The crabb'dest churl in all the South
Would hardly let a thirsty mouth
Gaze at thee and long to taste,
Nor grant one golden kiss at last
O, oranges, sweet or——

(*Enter Susan Atten, a middle-aged countrywoman, suddenly from* C; *runs and grasps Floret wildly by the shoulders, gazing earnestly into her face; then catching her quickly to her bosom kisses her passionately.*)

SUSAN. It is her—it is her. (*Exultingly*) Found! found! God be thanked! Harry!—Harry! Harry! come to me; I have found her.

Enter HARRY, *a stout young countryman. Hastens to them with a bewildered air.*]

FLORET. *Struggling frightenedly.*] Who are you? Let me go; I dont know you.

SUSAN. O, yes! O, yes! [*Earnestly.*] Indeed, indeed you do. Listen, darling, listen. [*Sings tremulously.*]

Ye—yet che—cheeks ther—there are,
Yet cheeks th—th—there are,
Sweet—sweeter—O, good—good—
Good God—

—[*Breaks down.*] Help me, O, help me now, Almighty Father. [*Weeping, holding her arms out beseachingly.*]

FLORET. [*Racking her brain.*] Mamma Atten! Mamma Atten! I remember you now. O, dear, dear Mamma Atten. [*Flings her arms around her neck and sobs joyously.*] O, take me with you; take me with you.

SUSAN. Never fear, darling, never fear. The queen herself should not take you away from me now. Harry, brother, if you ever cared for me be true to me now. I shall need your heart and your arm to help me. This, Harry, is the Poo—Poor Girl. Your poor sweetheart—

HARRY. [*Turning up his cuffs quickly.*] Lord! Lord! Poor Fanny Shelly's child. She belong to Beachborough, an' to Beachborough she shall go. [*Very decidedly.*] I'm darned if she dont.

DADDY *awakes, and with a howl of rage rushes toward Floret.*]

HARRY. [*Grasping him by the collar, jerks him violently back.*] I think, [*coolly,*] I think not, old man; not muchly. [*Daddy foams with rage, struggles and kicks. Victor assists Harry.*]

[*Enter* HAGAR LOT *at* R, *gazes at them, and exits at* C.]

HARRY. 'Come, now, Susy, you take the Poor Girl and take her away from the course, for we must get out of 'ere, or this old ruffian will have his whole pack upon us presently. But I'll attend to his case—I will, I'm darned if I dont. [*Going.*] Start quick, Susy, I'll meet you outside.

DADDY. (*Shrieking frantically.*) Vite Rose—Vite Rose, my own Vild Rose, tell 'em I've brought you up as my own babby. Vite Rose, vere are you? Come to poor old Daddy, an' tell these willians I'm yer——

(*Exit Harry and Victor with Daddy at* R 3*d* E.)

SUSAN. Yes darling we will leave this horrid place and go home to Beachborough. You shall never, never leave us again. (*Floret clings passionately to her neck, kisses her. Exit at* L.

Enter HAGAR LOT *and* CONSTANCE.

HAGAR. Fear not, lady. [*Hagar very tastefully dressed in Gipsy costume; is of a very dark complexion.*] I am here to serve you. Your husband is too busily engaged in betting his money upon the races to miss you.

CONSTANCE. [*Pale and agitated.*] So I believe; but even though it were otherwise I must and will speak to you, let what will be the consequence; yea, even though I knew he saw me.

HAGAR. I see that your strength of mind has lost none of its power. The nursing of a terrible secret sometimes eats into the nerves and destroys them, as a sorrow that cannot be cured preys upon the heart and withers it.

CONSTANCE. [*Haughtily.*] You will remember, Hagar Lot, that your knowledge of my secret extends only to your service in removing for me a child from the custody of one set of persons to that of another; nothing more. Beyond that knowledge you must not seek to advance, and you need not think to work upon my fears by insinuating that you know more than I am convinced you can know.

HAGAR. I sought not you, lady, I coveted not the possession of your secret. I wished to see you again, not stimulated by any such motives as you fancy would urge me to seek you, but because I fancied that a nature such as yours could not be harder than the black rock against which the sea beats ceaselessly, and not in vain. I ask you no questions, lady. I tender you no suspicions. I tell you in plain language that the Poor Girl is the daughter of Constance Plantagenet; that I know it; and if you ask me for proofs I'll tell you that my eyes have furnished me with all the proofs I need. I have no design to betray your secret, but I thought that your proud nature, your stern and haughty spirit, had perhaps relented, and that you would have pitied the friendless child whom you had compelled to be a friendless outcast, and that you would at least help to save the innocent child from a life of wretched degradation; and I ask you, in kindness to the poor child whom to-day you—

CONSTANCE. [*Impatiently.*] Stay! I have listened to you in silence and with patience. Now, understand me—I wish you to listen to me, and to reply simply yes or no. I will pay you what you may demand of me, but you must do what I require of you completely and effectually. Without further explanation let me proceed to speak of that—[*agitated*] of that—that child whom you successfully carried away from Beachborough, and who—

HAGAR. My lady, do you know—

CONSTANCE. [*Sternly.*] Silence! and listen to me! I have seen this child to-day; it has started up like a reptile in my path. I must be secured from its occurrence again at any and every sacrifice. It must never appear before me again. Do you understand me? I say never!

HAGAR. [*With a look of horror.*] Am I understand, lady, that the life you gave you wish to take away?

CONSTANCE. [*Stamping angrily.*] You are to understand me,

woman, that I wish no harm to the accursed thing. I care not how comfortable and happy it may become. I should be—I cannot deny—glad—glad—glad if it were dead—yes, dead. [*Overcome with emotion, but hastily brushes the tears away.*] Happy, most happy, if it had never been born. But I wish it no harm—no harm. I would not injure it, no, though it were alone with me, and discovery of its death impossible; but it must be removed entirely out of my sight, quite away from any place where I shall ever go, or may chance to go, where my name has ever been heard. It is all I ask.

HAGAR. [*Scornfully, tauntingly.*] The task, lady, is not so simple, nor so easy of accomplishment, as you seem to think. It might have been this morning, but it is not now.

CONSTANCE. [*Eagerly.*] What do you mean?

HAGAR. [*Emphatically.*] That the Poor Girl is no longer in the same hands she was half an hour ago.

CONSTANCE. [*Consternation.*] Explain.

HAGAR.] As I came by this spot to join you, lady, I observed a sudden commotion. I looked closer, although I had no intention of stopping at all, but I saw the Poor Girl in the arms of, and clinging to, a young woman. Near to her was old Daddy Windy, with whom the child has lived since I removed her from Beachborough. He was struggling in the gripe of a powerful young countryman. I waited to see no more, for I knew what had happened.

CONSTANCE. [*Tremblingly.*] What?

HAGAR. The young woman to whom the Poor Girl clung was named Susan Atten. She was a friend of that poor murdered girl, Fanny Shelley, who assumed the maternity of that child at the cost of her life and good name, and she believes the child to be hers. By this time she is on her way to Beachborough. Daddy Windy will denounce me in order to set himself free, and if I am captured, lady, I shall be compelled to reveal all.

CONSTANCE. [*Frantically.*] What is to be done now?

HAGAR. [*Thoughtfully.*] There is little to be done at present. To make any stir now would be fatal to both of us. I must keep out of the way, but I shall learn all that takes place at Beachborough. I do not hesitate now to lend myself to your wishes since I am assured that you wish the child no harm, because I think that a girl with no name had better for her own sake, better for her pride and her soul's sake, be placed where no one can ever know her origin or taunt her with it.

CONSTANCE. [*Agonizing emotion,*] Oh! what shall I do?

HAGAR. Maintain your position proudly and haughtily as usual, lady. Maintain it as if you defied fate to do its worst. No discovery injurious to you can be made for some time. You must be *proved* guilty to be held so. I should advise you, lady, now to return to the races. If the story about the Poor Girl's being claimed should be told you, you will be prepared for it. But whatever *may* happen, do not forget that you are still the *Marchioness of Westchester!*

CONSTANCE. [*Intense surprise.*] Oh God—she knows my rank. I thought—I thought—that [*speaking with difficulty,*] that —at least—was safe. [*Totters as though about to fall. Hagar catches her in her arms, when she swoons. Hagar kneels upon one knee and gives a low whistle.*]

(*Enter quickly*—LIPER LEPER *from* R.)

HAGAR. [*Low quick tone.*] Liper Leper, bend down and look well into the features of the haughty lady who lies here! She is the mother of the Poor Girl.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *Evening. Stage darkened. A well and neatly finished farm house sitting room; at* L *a door; on* R *and* L *of same a window; on* R *a door and on* R *of same a window. Susan Atten, Harry, and Floret, dressed neatly as a young country-maid—discovered sitting around the supper table, all eating; on table are lighted lamps. Floret's former dress is hung upon the wall; Floret is happy and lively; small bed in corner; also a flower stand with growing plants and flowers.*

HARRY. [*Mouth full.*] I say Susy, this aint altogether veal and ham pie, is it?

SUSAN. I am sorry, Brother, [*Sadly*] Your pleasure was so spoiled on yesterday.

HARRY. (*Dropping knife and fork with amazement.*] Spoiled? Susy sister, spoiled? What dost thee mean, girl? Why, I've never enjoyed myself so much in my life. Dost thee forget how I nipped the dirty old gipsy blade, and he twisted and wiggled like a worm upon a fish-hook? An' dost thee forget the pace we came down yon road to Beachborough, the mare swooping along like a deer with the hounds in full cry at her heels? Spoiled my day, Susy!—why, girl, it would ha' been nothing wi'out all the fun we've had! What dost (*turning to Floret*) thee say, little 'un? thee bain't very unhappy at what's happened], be ye?

FLORET. Oh, indeed I am so very, oh, so very, very happy now.

SUSAN. [*Placing her hand upon Floret's brow.*] You had forgotten Mamma Atten. [*Brushes away her tears.*]

FLORET. [*Thoughtfully.*] Yes, quite, quite forgotten you until you began to sing to me, and then such a strange sensation came over me. It was as if a flash of lightning had darted across my eyes and blinded me, and yet at the same time I saw an old church yard, and a green grave beneath a tree; I seemed to be kneeling by it and a face was close to mine, and it whispered in my ear, saying "God bless poor Godmama Fanny." [*Susan bites her lip to conceal her emotion. Harry turns to the window, wiping his eyes and coughing.*] Then the church yard seemed to go

away suddenly, and some voice said to me: 'It is Mamma Atten,' it was the same face which, I remember now, used to hang over me, and hear me pray when I went to bed. O, Mamma Atten; all that is in my head about you is confused; but I remember that you loved me, and were good to me, that you will not make me a beggar no more.

HARRY. [*Emphatically striking his fist upon the table.*] An' thee shall not, not while I've strength to lift my right hand and earn a penny to keep thee. My poor Fannie Shelley—my—my—[*Tries to clear his throat.*]

SUSAN. Not now, brother, not just now, dear Harry, we will talk over these things some other time; now let's set the table away.

HARRY, [*Decidedly.*] I'll be darned, Susy, if I ever enjoyed my groob so much in my life.

FLORET. [*Earnestly.*] I am sure I have; O! so much.

SUSAN. [*Faintly.*] And I hope I have, also. [*They rise. Floret and Susan remove the table. Harry lights his pipe.*]

HARRY. Well, Susy, I'll go out and attend to the cattle.

[*Exit* C.]

SUSAN. Now, darling, tell me [*drawing Floret to her side and kissing her*] how you slept last night?

FLORET. [*Joyfully.*] Oh, I have never slept so happily before—never—that I can remember. When I laid my head upon the pillow last night it seemed so soft—so delightfully soft. Then your kind voice was in my ears, and there was no fighting and swearing during the darkness, but all was quiet—so very quiet. Then I dreamed too, that I was in a large, bright golden palace, and I thought I was standing by the side of a lady—a lady like one I saw yesterday at the races—and I thought she parted my hair upon my forehead and kissed me, and spoke *so* kindly as she said, pointing to all the golden things in the grand room, and the servants all dressed like lords: 'These are all yours, Floret, for you are a lady born.' O, was'nt that nice, Mamma Atten?—Then I opened my eyes softly, for I knew that my dream was gone; and I was afraid that I was in a dark, dirty, cold room, and still with the Daddy and Grannam; but no, I was here—here, Mamma Atten, here—with you, never to go away from you until I die—and that will be a long, long time to come, will it not?

SUSAN. [*Pained.*] O, I hope so, darling. [*Hugging her close and kissing her affectionately.*] I will pray that the sad, sad time may be far off. [*Casting her eyes upon the frock.*] But I must destroy yonder frock, as I must on no account permit you to ever wear it again; [*takes it down and motions as if to rend it in pieces, pauses suddenly*] but stay, I will not destroy it, the sight of it, some day, may be of importance to you, for it will remind you that—

FLORET. You, Mamma Atten, saved me from being always a poor beggar girl—a poor, miserable little beggar-girl. O, no, do not tear it.

SUSAN. [*Replacing it.*] Now, darling, I must go and do the errand that I told you I had to do, and I beg of you to remain perfectly quiet while I am gone, and not to look out of the windows on any account, for perhaps some of those ugly gipsies may be prowling about and recognize you, and after I come back we will go out and take a walk.

FLORET. O, Mamma Atten, I will obey you faithfully.

SUSAN. I shall not be gone long, only a moment or two, good bye. [*Exits* R.]

FLORET. O, I'm so glad she's gone. [*Jumps about—pauses suddenly.*] O, no, I aint, either, for Mamma Atten is so good to me; but—then—I'm kinder glad, just a little mite—because, because I want to see what Victor gave me at Ascot races, and I have got such a jolly chance now. [*Feels in her bosom.*] Oh! my, its gone! [*Intense disappointment.*] I've lost it. [*Stands thoughtfully—then suddenly jumping about breaks into merry ringing laughter—clasping her hands.* No, it aint—no, it aint. Oh I know. [*Runs to bed and takes package from under pillow.*] There it is! There it is! [*She holds it up, looks at it, kisses it and is extravagantly joyous; draws chair to centre of room and carefully opens the paper, in which are five golden sovereigns; with a look of intense disappointment, and tears starting, she turns the paper over and over, then, with a violent, angry motion, she throws all upon the floor and leans her head upon the back of the chair and sobs as though heart broken.*]

[*Enter* SUSAN.]

SUSAN. [*Taking her hand,*] My child (*alarmed*) what is the matter? What has happened? Do speak and tell me.

FLORET. (*Passionately.*) You take the money, Mamma Atten, for I will not look at it; I will not touch it; I will not use it; for—for—for his sake—for anybody's.

SUSAN. (*Aside.*) My task is even yet more serious than I supposed it to be, but I will go through with it. Heaven will give me strength to do my duty by her to her last hour.

FLORET. (*Abruptly.*) Mamma Atten, do foreign princesses wear such frocks as that blue one with stars?

SUSAN. (*Surprised.*) No—O no, only poor little wretched creatures who dance and sing at fairs and races. [*Floret rises and grasps her tightly by the arm, looking her fiercely in the face, struggling to speak but passion chokes her.*] Hush, hush, darling, (*Arm around her neck, drawing her close.*) Such words shall never pass my lips again. You do not understand what I meant by what I said, and I will not explain, because it will only make bad worse—at all events it would prolong a painful subject. (*Kisses her. Floret brushes the tears away and returns it affectionately.*)

FLORET. (*Frankly.*) I am naughty at times, Mamma Atten. I must tell you that, and I feel proud to be naughty; but it is

wrong, I suppose, and you will teach me to be always good, wont you?

SUSAN. *Earnestly.*) I will try, indeed—indeed, darling, I will try.

FLORET. (*Thoughtfully.*) Yes, I am sure you will; but do not be cross with me when you want to make me better, because, when Daddy and Grannam were so fierce, and growled and swore at me, I used to make up my mind to drown or starve myself. (*Susan's countenance expresses pain*) And, Mamma Atten, (*impetuously,*] if you were to be very cross to me I should kill myself. I would do it with a knife, if I could not do it any other way. I— [*Susan shudders and puts her hand on Floret's mouth.*]

SUSAN. Great Heaven! You do not know what you are uttering—we will talk about this some other time. I will never be cross with you, dearest, but always reason with you gently and tenderly.

FLORET. And when I feel naughty—for I do sometimes feel naughty—angry, proud—like an imp of the devil, Grannam used to say—I will tell you, Mamma Atten, and you shall show me what to do, to make me good again.

SUSAN. Yes, yes, darling, but we will not talk any more about this now, some other time will—

FLORET. [*Persistently.*] But, Mamma Atten, I want to talk to you now—about my mother. [*Earnestly.*] Why are you so fond of me? You are Mamma Atten, I know, but you are not my real, true mamma, as your mamma at Beachborough is to you, are you?

SUSAN. [*Starting.*] But, why do you ask me so strange a question, darling?

FLORET. [*Musingly.*] Because, I have often heard Grannam say, that she was better than a mother to me; but she was never anything like so tender and so kind to me as you have been; so if Grannam was better than a mother to me, my mother must have been a horribly dreadful wicked woman!

SUSAN. [*Shocked.*] Hush, darling, do not speak in that manner. You do not know what you are talking about.

FLORET. [*Earnestly.*] Yes I do; Mamma Atten, you are not my own mamma, are you?

SUSAN. No, darling, but—

FLORET. Then my mamma must have been a cruel, wicked creature. She must have sold me to Daddy, because she would not work for me, and keep me until I could work for and keep myself.

SUSAN. [*Quickly.*] You cannot, my dear child, judge of things you know nothing about. Darling, I will tell you, very briefly, something of your early life. Fannie Shelley, who was the foster sister and maid servant of a young lady by the name of Constance Plantaganet, brought you to Beachborough when you was but a few weeks old. Bound by some promise, which she regarded as of

the utmost solemnity, she refused to reveal your parentage, even to my poor brother Harry, who was her lover, and who, in a moment of jealous frenzy taxed *her* with being your—your—mother—poor, poor girl—unable to bear all that was heaped upon her fair fame, she lost her reason, and fled. Articles of her wearing apparrel were found soon after in the river, and quickly after a body which, although past recognition, was identified and buried as her. My brother, Harry, believing in her when too late, and nearly wild with remorse, brought you to me, intending to rear you as his own—hoping thereby to make all the atonement in his power.—At the age of four you were stolen from us, and although we have searched unceasingly ever since after you, yet unavailingly until yesterday, when poor Fannie Shelley's song, as sung by you, burst upon my ears, and I knew that you were found, found, thank God, never, never, to leave us again. But let us talk of something else now, darling—

FLORET. Not yet, dear Mamma Atten. I want to say more about my mother. I have often, often thought of her, and have wondered why I had no mamma, like other little girls; but I supposed it was because I was poor and ragged. I could not bear to speak to Daddy or Grannam about her, for I thought they would call her names, and then, if they had, I should have cursed them and spat at them.

SUSAN. [*Hurriedly.*] Floret, darling, what are you saying?

FLORET. [*Eyes glittering.*] I hated Grannam, and I often cursed her; but she was not my mother—she was not so bad—I feel now that I hate my mother; shall I not curse——

SUSAN. [*Bursting into tears.*] O, my child, my child, you will break my heart. [*Liper Leper is seen peering in at window.*

FLORET. [*Throwing her arms around Susan's neck.*] O, what have I done, Mamma Atten—O, do forgive me—forgive me—forgive me—and I never will be naughty again. [*Sobs wildly.*]

SUSAN. [*Tenderly.*] God bless you, my child. I am not angry with you, but I could not help feeling bad, for—well, well, [*brushing the tears away.*] never mind now—[*cheerfully*] come Floret let us go out a little while. You would like to take a walk would'nt you?

[LIPER LEPER *climbs quickly through window and goes to Floret. Susan screams for help and catches Floret in her arms.*]

FLORET. O, Liper, you here? (*Going towards him with outstretched hand.*) I am so glad that you have not forgotten poor Floret.

LIPER. (*Taking her hand.*) Forgotten you, Floret? (*Reproachfully.*) Forgotten you?

SUSAN. (*Frightenedly.*) You shall not speak to her. Go away. Go, I tell you, or I will scream for help.

LIPER. (*Low musical tone.*) The White Rose will trust the

briar which has shielded and protected her from the storm many a time. (*To Floret.*) Speak for yourself, lily of the dell. Your own heart and my deeds will speak for me, silver daisy.

FLORET. (*Quickly.*) It is Liper Leper, Mamma Atten. He was always kind and good to me. I will trust him, Mamma. though all the world said I ought not. [*Extends her hand to him which he takes and kisses—retains it.*

LIPER. I am used to sorrow, but it has been sad for me since we parted, Floret, yet I rejoiced when I heard you were taken away from Daddy Windy, for I wished to see you happy; and though I know that the stars are now, and for a time, against you, yet I will do all I can, as I have done, to ward off the blow which is hovering over you and is intended to lay you low.

SUSAN. [*Angrily.*] Cease this cant to such a child as this and go away, or—

FLORET. [*Earnestly.*] Do not speak harshly to Liper. I would trust myself with him anywhere, for he would never suffer anyone to hurt me, would you Liper?

LIPER. [*Tenderly.*] I would not, pearl drop. [*To Susan.*] Listen! Floret is the child of nobody. Daddy Windy has as strong a claim to her as you who took her from him at the races. Hagar Lot a better than both. Perhaps she is better with those who yet have possession of her. But let them look to her, and keep her close. Daddy has circled round her like a hawk; even now he is in this very vicinity, and he will, if you are not more cunning and cautious, swoop down on the dovelet at last. Floret's star is pale, sickly, cloudy—the signs betoken peril to her; but there is one star which, still bright, watches over her—that is my own. What it may yet prove I am not able to tell; but I will watch over her and guard her from harm so long as I have the power. I will depart, for I came only to warn you. [*Going out as he came—turning.*] Floret, when you want my help you will find me near you! Good bye. Good bye. [*Exits quickly,*]

FLORET. O yes, good, kind, friend. I will trust you, for I know you will watch over me and protect me. [*Susan is nervously watching Liper in the distance.*]

SUSAN. (*Aside.*) I dont quite like the looks of that gipsy fellow. I'll just follow him a little ways and watch him. (*To Floret.*) I'll be right back, Floret. I'm only going a short distance, not fairly out of your sight. You wont be afraid, will you? (*Exit at* L.)

FLORET. (*Sits down and picks flowers—forms them into a boquet.*) O no, I'll not be afraid, for Liper is near by. O, he's so good and kind. I wish he wasn't a gipsy—(*looking at boquet.*) There now, that's kinder pretty—yes, but that scarlet flower would look better here. (*Alters it.*) There, that's better, but its not so pretty a nosegay as I could wish. [*The Daddy is seen creeping cautiously through the window with a bag in his hand, and says aside, "'Ere's a purty blossom all a blowin' and a growin'. I knowed Liper Leper would find her, and I've bin his shadder, I 'ave."*]

But yet, if Victor were here I would give it to him, and tell him that I would have made it much prettier if I could. Victor is such a pretty name—Victor! Lord Victor! How grand and beautiful it sounds. Ah! I'm sure he did not [*Hagar stands at window peering in*] mean to scorn me when he gave me that money, I am *sure* he did not; and when I see him again I shall say to him—[*The Daddy has crept up silently, and, with a triumphant, diabolical expression, suddenly throws a sack over her head, bearing her to the floor. She utters a suppressed shriek and lays lifeless.*]

DADDY. [*Triumphantly.*] I've got yer again, my vite thorn. Sixteen bunches a pennee! Sweet lavenders! Sixteen bunches a pennee! [*Pours liquid upon a cloth and holds it to her face.*] Ah! I'd like to see the devil himself take you from me again.]

ACT III.

THREE YEARS LATER.

SCENE I. *Wild out door scenery. The Gipsy King, an old man of seventy years, is discovered seated upon a high grassy knoll; near him stands Hagar Lot; gathered around them are men, women and children of the tribe. Liper Leper is discovered in the background.*

HAGAR. (*Pointing.*) He is here. O, Tawny Prince! In his hand he holds the White Rose.

[*Enter* DADDY *leading* FLORET. *dressed in accordance with her age and position, to whose hand* IDA *is clinging.*]

DADDY. [*Aside.*] Elcia, of Castile, Hagar's old ancient uncle. I see's the game! O, but—O, but—[*puts his dagger secretly up his sleeve.*] Great Tawny Prince, I, Daddy Windy, Maunder and Patrico, am here! I bring vith me the Vite Rose; my Vite Rose, mine—mine—only mine, as I shall prove to you, venever you shall magnanimously gi' me the chance o' doin' it.

KING. Vich is the Vite Rose?

DADDY. [*Leading Floret to him.*] Behold the Vikl Vite Rose! [*An eager whisper runs through the assembly and every eye is fastened on her.*]

KING. Who's t'other?

DADDY. I found her along vith the Vite Rose, an' I let 'er come vith us, acos the Vite Rose vished it.

KING. She is a house-dweller?

DADDY. In her nat'ral state, cert'ny.

KING. Born such—bred such—desires to die such?

DADDY. Aint a doubt on't. I knows nothin' about 'er 'cept vot I've told you.

KING. (*harshly.*) You have done wrong to bring her here; she must be driven away!

DADDY. (*Grimning.*) Vith all my 'art.

FLORET. (*Hastily starting forward.*) No! no! no!

DADDY. (*Angrily.*) Be silent, Vite Rose! Dont say a vord, e'cept vot I bids you if you vouldn't have fresh grass growin' and a blowin' over yer 'ead ven the stars peep out. [*Turning.*] I dont vant to keep her; she aint no use to me. She's followed me 'ome 'ere like a strange cur, and I dont want to gi' 'er 'ouse room.

KING. [*Commandingly.*] Drive her forth!

GIPSIES. [*All shouting and advancing toward Ida threateningly.*] Yes, drive her forth.

IDA. (*With a cry of fright runs to Floret and throws her arms around her.*) Do not let these horrible people drive me away from you. (*Tones of distress.*)

DADDY. (*Grasping Ida, and with abrupt violence tears her rudely from Floret, hurling her back, then grasps Floret's wrist.*) Go away! Be off with you! Go!

(*A loud hoot from the Gipsies, and they again advance upon Ida, Floret quickly wrenches her wrist from Daddy and rushes impetuously through the crowd to Ida, when, catching Ida around the waist with one arm, she draws herself proudly up.*]

FLORET. She *shall* remain with me, (*haughtily*) or we will quit this hateful place together.

DADDY. [*Snarlingly.*] No!—no! You dont quit no place vithout me. (*Makes an attempt to sieze her.*)

FLORET. (*Quickly draws a dagger.*) Stay where you are; (*passionately*) this blade has, too, a poisoned point. (*Daddy cowers.*) Liper Leper gave it to me, and told me that it was venom-dipped; *he* would not have said that falsely to me. Do not move a step nearer to me, or you, who have threatened me with death, shall receive yours at my hands. You are driving me mad. I will go with you no more. I will die first. You *shall not* drive this poor bruised girl from me. We will remain together, or we will die together. A scratch—a touch—is death. Aha—aha. You—you—you have told me that.

IDA. (*Piteously.*) Do not let them separate us, Floret. I do not fear to die, but do not let us be parted, unless by death. [*Floret presses her to her bosom, but with eyes intensely fastened upon the Daddy—Liper Leper comes softly behind her.*]

LIPER. [*Softly.*] Floret.

FLORET. [*Turning like lightning.*] Liper Leper. [*Surprise.*]

DADDY. [*Nervously.*] Liper Leper.

LIPER. A few words now; a conference anon. Your friend must depart hence; even, as for a time, you must remain here. You will trust her with me? I will treat her as gently and as respectfully as I would—even you. Persuade her to leave you, and quickly, too. If ever you placed faith in me, Floret, you may now.

FLORET. (*Kisses her.*) Go with him, dear Ida. You will be far safer with him than with me.

IDA. (*Earnestly.*) Shall we be reunited?

LIPER. (*Emphatically.*) You shall. (*Ida throws her arms around Floret's neck and kisses her passionately—then giving her hand to Liper they exit at* L.]

HAGAR. [*Takes Floret's hand.*] Come with me and fear not. (*Stands before the King.*]

KING. (*Gently.*) You are the Vild Vite Rose? Speak. Dont be afeard, child. Answer me.

FLORET. I have been so called by the Daddy

KING. You know the Daddy?

FLORET. I do.

KING. And you knows this young 'ooman, too? (*Pointing to Hagar.*

FLORET. (*Hesitatingly.*) I have seen her before to-day.

KING. Werry good. Werry good. (*To Hagar and Daddy.*) You both on you claims her?

HAGAR. I do, unhesitatingly. The Daddy has no claim to her whatever. If he has, let him prove it now. If he does so to your satisfaction, O, Tawney Prince, I will resign her to him without a murmur, and never more seek to disturb him in his right to detain her in his custody.

DADDY. (*Quivering jaws.*) She is mine—mine—mine.

KING. Speak, Hagar.

HAGAR. (*Erect before him with folded arms.*) There is a law O, Tawney Prince, in force among our people, which gives to her charge solely the child whom she may have received from those who disdain or fear to acknowledge it as there own to the world.

KING. That is so.

HAGAR. This girl—the nameless, the homeless, the outcast—[*Floret weeping*] was consigned to me by the only being living who had the power of doing so. I took the bird from the nest, and upon myself the responsibility of its support; I dare nor bring it to the tribe for suspicion would have fallen upon them, so I placed her with the Daddy, warning him that I should claim her from him some day. Accepting a sum of money, he consented to receive her on my conditions. Years passed away, and the time arrived when it became necessary that I should claim her. I did so. The Daddy, violating his agreement, refused to restore her to me—he even threatened me with a scratch of a poisoned knife if I attempted to take her away from him. I was compelled to resort to strtagem to regain her, and, having succeeded, I placed her where she became the mistress of book-lore and those accomplishments which lady house-dwellers delight in. For three years she has been in this institution of learning, but because of ill treatment she and her companion here fled, and this very day has again fallen into the Daddy's way; he has again seized her, and I demand her from him, having alone that claim to her which our laws sustain and which our people respect.

KING. What answer can you make to Hagar?

DADDY. Great Tawny Prince, [*cringing tone,*] Hagar, the Castilian, is a vonderful 'ooman! she knows the stars vell; she—

KING. [*Snappishly.*] Do speak out like a man, athout fear or favor, and not go beatin' about the bush like a robin.

DADDY. Vell, then, I owns as Hagar brought to me the Vite Rose. She axed me to bring it up, and to keep it; I kep' it for years, and ven it vas taken from me she neither claimed it nor took it away—it vas someone else, at Ascot races three years ago; an' ven she came to me for it it vas arter I had stolen it avay again for myself. Ven it vas captured from me her claim vent avay vith it, an' ven I stole it back the gal vas my property, an' Hagar can't

apply to our laws an' show me vone vich gives her a ounce claim to the Vite Rose; if she can, then I'm done an' I'll be dumb. But, Tawny Prince, there's a heap o' money a hangin' to this bloomin' flower, vich vill be mine venever I restores her to her family, as I shall do some day ven they vants her 'ome again wery bad; so ven I gets the goold I speak on through this 'ere little vite-'eart cherry blossom, I shall diwide the whole on't atween the lot on you. [*A murmur of approval from all.*]

HAGAR. He has already made a considerable sum of money by the beauty of the Poor Girl, when he compelled her to sell flowers, a poor, ragged, bare-legged creature.

DADDY. Dressed as a forrin princess, regardless of expense, vant you, Vite Rose? Didn't you captivate the 'eart of a young lord ven you vore a sky-blue, star-spotted little gownd, sich as fairies dances in on moonlight nights, an' a wreath of roses upon your snowy brow. [*Floret turns away, weeping bitterly.*]

HAGAR. [*Waving her hand impatiently.* This is idle talk; but let us end it. I stand here, O, Tawny Prince, upon my right. I know this disowned girl's friends—he does not; he never *can* make a market of her secret—he never *shall.* I can restore her to them—I may. If I do it will be without asking—without accepting—nay, by refusing any recompense. Give her to him, you doom her to some years of shame, of mental agony, to ruin—nay, to utter destruction; restore her to my charge, and, at least, she shall have her happiness and her honor to her own keeping—

DADDY. (*Excitedly.*) Out-talk my right if you can, Hagar 'ooman. I stole the Vite Rose ven she vos no longer yourn, Hagar 'ooman, to control, an' she belongs to me, by the unchangeable laws o' our community.

KING. Silence, all! I have heard both sides; Hagar forfeited, I think, all right to further control over the destiny of the Vite Rose, ven she, as she has acknowledged, placed her to gain learnin' vith house-dwellers.

DADDY. [*Exultingly.*] A course, a course.

KING. Silence! An' I thinks that the Patrico 'stablished a new an' indispootable claim to her when he kidnapped the Vite Rose on his own account.

DADDY. (*As before.*) A course.

KING. *Silence*! Come nearer to me, Vite Rose. Now, Vite Rose, you must answer my questions, an' answer 'em truly.—Dont be afeared to speak out. A good deal o' your own comfort vill depend upon vot you say yourself. Do you know who you are?

[*Liper Leper enters and stands where Floret can easily observe him.*]

FLORET. (*Faintly.*) I do not,

KING. But aint you got no idee; aint you got no clue, no nothin' to prove who you are some day? (*Floret shakes her head sorrowfully.*) That's rather odd. I've seen an' knowed a good deal about kidnapped kinchens, an' they've generally had a mark,

a strorberriee, or a mouse, or a heervig, or a lobster, or sumfin' about 'em o' that kind. Aint you got nothin' o' that sort?

FLORET. (*Faintly.*) Nothing!

KING. [*Looking at Hagar and Daddy.*] As both on you claim 'er, I s'pose that von or 'tother on you, or both it may be, have got a token vich the family o' the Vite Rose vill recognize ven they sees it? [*Hagar remains silent—Liper Leper earnestly gesticulates to Floret to make bare her arm.*] This is a little orkurd, for since you have nothin' in the vay of a token by which you may be recognized by any von who might put in a better claim than either Hagar or the Patrico, I must yield you to the Daddy, who owns you by capture.

FLORET. [*Suddenly lays bare her arm upon which is seen a typhon-shaped mark. She holds it before the King's eyes.*] Behold this symbol! By it I may be known. I am *El Ydaiour*!

KING. [*Springs to his feet trembling with excitement.*] Listen, all! The 'nigma is read; the stars speak. The claims of Hagar, the Castilian, and the Patrico are swep' away like thistle-down afore the vind. Look upon the Vite Rose as the Vite Rose no more.—She is El Ydaiour, *The Wanderer*!

GIPSIES. (*All with wonder.*) El Ydaiour, the Wanderer!

KING. (*Waves his hand for silence.*) The child is from the land of the friendless, from the roofless shed of the fatherless, the motherless, the kinless. She has no roof-tree but the sky; no bed but the green, grassy turf. She has no tribe among nations. As a human being, she has no rights—save one that is sacred to her, and to be sacredly observed by us—her right is Hospitality! (*An approving shout is uttered by the Gipsies.*) From this moment El Ydaiour is free to us, free with us, free from us, her claim overrules all others; she commands from us shelter and sustenance, help in her distress, assistance of the strong arm when she needs it, and she *must have it.*

GIPSIES. (*All.*) She shall have it.

KING. The symbol on her wrist is a token to which we all bow—it is one to which Hagar, the Castilian, and the Patrico must bend.

GIPSIES. [*Sternly all.*] They must.

KING. El Ydaiour! Fear no more; every man here is your protector; every woman your servant and your friend while you remain among us. You may eat, drink, sleep and depart in peace, and ven you goes your vay, neither Hagar nor the Partrico dares to follow you, or touch you, if you desire it not. If they do, they will incur the Gipsies' curse; eyes will flash at 'em, tongues hoot at an' scorn 'em—they will be hunted and harried, lashed and stoned, flogged and briered, and at the last hour of their life no sun shall vatch 'em die, no sun shall see 'em live; but they shall hang and rot, bit by bit, day by day, year by year, from the deadly vite branches of a vithered, blight-smitten tree, the gipsies' curse clinging to 'em so long as vone bone of their frail carcases is left to the eye of man. I have spoken. El Ydaiour, move vere you vill. Break up, all.

[*All but the following characters exit. Hagar and the Daddy make a movement toward Floret, who gives an alarmed look at Liper; he quickly places himself at her side. The Daddy is immediately seized by two men.*]

GIPSY. Vere's the poisoned knife? Give it to me. [*Daddy mechanically hands it to him.*]

LIPER. You have no cause for fear, Floret; you are now more powerful than the King himself.

HAGAR. [*Bitterly.*] Ay! more powerful than I who holds your happiness in my keeping. I thought not, when I marked that symbol on your wrist so that I alone might know you when a woman grown, that it would rob me wholly of the power of injuring or of serving you. [*Showing her teeth in rancor.*] But you are also absolved from his power; you have drawn his fangs, his claws; his sordid avarice can never again reach you, his devilish malignity harm you. He has threatened you with death from a poisoned weapon—he dare not from this moment touch you, even in play, with a feather. He may not even speak to you unless you will it—mark me—unless it be with your will and at your wish. And this privilege extends to me as to him; if it is your wish to me I will speak to you alone—I will lift the seals from my lips; I will tell you who you are and what you are; I will at once disclose to you all I know concerning your secret history, and then—bid you farewell for ver.

FLORET. O, I desire most earnestly to learn all I can of my true history. I will speak with you alone now—at this moment—and I entreat you to keep nothing hid from me.

HAGAR. [*Sternly.*] Are you prepared to listen to that which you may hereafter wish, from the depths of a broken heart, had never fallen upon your ears?

FLORET. [*Quickly.*] I am prepared for every consequence. No anguish, no torture, can equal that which my absolute ignorance of who and what I am inflicts upon my heart.

HAGAR. [*Waving her hand.*] Leave us, then; we would be alone.

[*Men, with Daddy, going.*

DADDY. [*Struggling fearfully, stretching out his arms and hoarsely crying.*] Vite Rose—Vi—Vite Rose! dont leave me—dont go away with Hagar, dont—you vill rob me—of all—of all—all my—goold—my goold— [*The words die away in his throat, and his head rolls horribly from side to side. He falls forward into their arms in a fit. They exit, followed by Liper Liper.*]

HAGAR. We will rest here. What I have to reveal, and you to hear, may now be spoken unreservedly.

FLORET. Be it as you think best. I am in your hands, and I have no choice. I am silent,

HAGAR. Listen, child, and I will give you an illustration. Years past, a young Count of Spain, riding through a wood, was shot by an unseen hand; a young girl not older than yourself,

heard the shot and the wild cry of agony which burst from the lips of the wounded man, and she hastened to the spot from which the shriek of agony arose. There, senseless, she found the bleeding body of the youthful cavalier. She summoned assistance from her tribe—for she was a gipsy—his wound was carefully cared for by her, and she was rewarded upon his recovery by his love. She was rewarded with his hand—for he married her, and lived with her and her people a year, At the end of that time a child was born to them; it was a girl; the Count loved it, as he loved its mother, passionately. He presented himself before his father, the head and the haughtiest member of one of the oldest families of Castile. He was received with great joy and much rejoicing. In the fulness of his heart he gave to his family a history of his accident and its result. He spoke in glowing terms of his beautiful young wife and his beloved child, but he suddenly perceived his hearers subsiding into a cold silence. When he had concluded, they were frozen into figures of ice. He was a minor, and his proud father made short work of the matter. By the laws of Spain he was unable to contract a marriage without his father's consent—he was unable to contract a marriage with one who was without the pale of his church. The marriage was at once annulled. The Count was thrown into prison by his father because he rebelled with frantic fiereeness against his authority, and in attempting to escape he lost his life, and his love—his wife no longer—died of a broken heart when the news, alas! too soon was conveyed to her. Now, Floret, mark me. That Count of Spain was *my* father; that young girl was *my* mother. What am I? Do you comprehend me, girl? What position do I hold in the world? Answer me! [*Floret remains silent, being deeply agitated.*] What am I in the eyes of the law? What am I in the estimation of that huge hypocrisy, society? A pariah!—an outcast!—a nameless creature of shame. Do you understand me now, Floret?

FLORET. [*Faintly.*] I cannot see that you are an object of humiliation, for your father and mother were married, and by a church ceremonial, I presume?

HAGAR. They were. The words invoked by the priest who united them were: "Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder." But man DID put them asunder, and made of *me* a creature of shame—a thing of the world, not legitimate. I the daughter of a Count of Spain, am that humiliated object (*gasping fearfully*) of—of—of contumelious reproach—a—a—ugh; my throat swells at the thought of the hated word—I am in the eyes of the law—a—a bastard. [*She appears very wretched, wiping the perspiration from her brow. Floret is extremely agitated.*] I now address myself to your past, Floret. I have given you an illustration. You can apply it.

FLORET. [*Shrieks with agony.*] No! no! no! no! Do not—Oh do not say that—not that—oh no—not that. (*Gasps desperately for breath and throws herself down, sobbing as if heart broken.*]

HAGAR. Nay, you must have facts, then. You entreated me to conceal nothing from you—you shall know all. It cannot matter to you to know how or where your parents met. It will suffice for you to know that they did meet. Your mother at that fated hour was of your age, no more, and as like you in feature and in form as it may be possible for twin sisters to be; she met—and in secret—one whose form was framed to make a young girl's heart leap out of her keeping into his—one who, having extorted her heart from her, had not one to give in return. She awoke to the discovery that she had been made the dupe of an insincere, a heartless villain; that the heart she yearned for—for which she had wholly and completely resigned herself—had not been surrendered to her; and she awoke, also, to the horror that she—young fair, of patrician descent—possessed, in lieu of this heart, Great Spirit, a child. [*Floret exhibits deep emotion, drawing her breath with agonizing difficulty.*] Poor little innocent, miserable, nameless, object! It was born to misfortune, born to trial and trouble. Its father—well, we will not speak of him, save to say, that he married a young lady of fair fame and much wealth. Its mother very quickly afterward gave her hand in marriage to one of the wealthiest and haughtiest peers of this great kingdom. She ignored the existence of her child, but married that illustrious Lord, who made her his marchioness. The child proceeded on its destiny. A young girl named Fanny Shelley, who had been reared with the mother of the babe, and who loved her truly and tenderly, took charge of the offspring, intending to take the place of the parent who had so barbarously deserted it; but the child, in the fulfilment of its destiny, brought only woe to this unhappy girl. Her lover, to whom she refused to disclose the poor girl's secret, taxed her with being its sinful mother, poor girl! The result of the bitter quarrel, which followed was, that one morning poor Fanny Shelley was found drowned—murdered too— in a deep brook near Beachborough. [*Floret tries to speak—to scream—she gasps, pants and struggles for breath. At length hoarse sobs burst from her lips.*]

FLORET. I—I am that child? Mamma Atten told me—but not murdered—Oh! not murdered—:

HAGAR. I said murdered—foully murdered. [*Floret utters one long, anguished, despairing cry of agony, and falls lifeless to the ground, Gazing at her coldly.*] Poor girl; her destiny is a hard one; but the planet which rules that destiny has prognosticated suffering only for it; it portends danger and suffering still. I am but an instrument of the stars. I would fain not go on with the task I have undertaken, but my destiny and hers will that it should be so. [*Floret raises herself, and pressing her hands upon her temples, gazes around dreamily.*] Now remember all that I have communicated to you. Have you aught further to ask of me?

FLORET. [*Desperate effort.*] Tell me the name of the—the woman whom you have said is my mother, and a marchioness—the name of my mother—I ask only that.

HAGAR. That you may curse her? No, no! You are a girl—a mere child—you—

FLORET. [*Deep agony.*] In the name of that Almighty Power, in whose dread presence we may both shortly stand, have mercy on me and tell me the name of my mother—for she is still my *mother*, no matter *what* sin or error she may be guilty of—I entreat you to tell me her name, that I may go to her and on my bended knees entreat her to recognize me—to acknowledge me—to call me daughter. O, I will plead so earnestly, she cannot—she cannot refuse me! O, woman, if you have a woman's heart, you cannot, you will not refuse me; do, I beseech of you, do—do—take me to her. [*Sobbing.*]

HAGAR. [*Moved—aside.*] It is worth the trial. It shall be attempted. [*To Floret.*] You shall stand before her, Poor Girl, and assert your rights at least once, and then I will bid you and your destiny farewell forever,

FLORET. O thanks, thanks, for this kind act.

HAGAR. I require none, nor do I wish for them; but come, are you ready to stand before her who gave you existence?

FLORET. [*Calmly.*] Yea! though I knew as I crossed the threshold of her door, I should fall dead. [*Both exit at* R.]

(*Enter* LIPER LEPER L.)

LIPER. [*Gazing after her.*] O, White Rose, purified even by the fiery ordeal through which you are passing, you shall yet bloom and be the fairest flower of them all, for I will put in your possession that—ere you reach the Marchioness of Westchester—which shall force her to recognize you as her own. Aye, her own *legitimate* child. Be of good cheer, Floret, be of good cheer; for you shall yet stand among them the proudest of the proud. Hagar has been fearfully wrong in her surmises. I alone know the truth of the Poor Girl's parentage—but the time has come when she must know it also. Aye! before another hour shall pass over her head. I must follow them and entreat Hagar to give me a word in private with the White Rose.

[*Exits after them.*]

SCENE II. *Floret. A by-path or lane. Liper and Floret enter together from* L. *Floret is sad.*

FLORET. I knew that I should see you, Liper. [*Striving to keep back the tears.*] I was sure that you would not fail me in this, my darkest hour, and now you have come. Oh, receive my thanks—my utmost gratitude, Liper.

LIPER. I wished to see you alone, White Rose, and I have brought you here in order that I may, if possible, dash the bitter cup, which you were about to drain, forever from your lips. In order that I may lighten the burden of sorrow which is lying heavy on your heart and which is almost greater than you are able to bear. [*Floret is sobbing heavily.*] White Rose I was concealed

near by and heard all that Hagar has just told you. She lied [*fiercely*] when she told you you were a thing of shame and not legitimate. [*Floret bewildered, and showing evidences of the most unbounded astonishment.*) You are as honorably and proudly born as the Queen of England herself.

FLORET. [*With great anxiety.*] Oh, Heavenly Father [*with folded upraised hands and on her knees*] accept the thanks of a broken heart for thy infinite mercy. [*Rising*] Oh Liper, do you know what you have said; do you know what you have done? You have opened the gate of Heaven, almost. Pray God you have not done so heedlessly. Oh, you could not be so cruel. [*Sobbing.*] It would—would—kill—me to go back from whence I came. Oh speak to me and tell me your authority for what you say.

LIPER. What more competent authority can there exist upon this point than myself, and I say that Hagar told you an iniquitous lie! and yet she knows no better; she believes that she spoke the truth.

FLORET. [*Surprise.*] You an authority, Liper?

LIPER. Why not? Reflect—nay, I will briefly prove to you what an authority I am. I was concealed near to Hagar Lot when the Marchioness of Westchester instructed her to steal you from Beachborough. I stole you sleeping from your bed. I was with Hagar Lot when the Marchioness saw you at Ascot Races, and who in an after interview with Hagar concerning *you*, fainted. Would she have fainted, think you, had you not been her own child. I have shadowed the Marchioness ever since, and I followed her into a church one day and saw her eagerly scan the pages of a big book. It was the Register of Marriages. (*Floret listening eagerly.*) I saw her take from her pocket a knife. I listened attentively and I heard the sharp run of a knife over the paper. When she rose up, she hastily crushed a sheet of paper in her hand, and then hid it away. She returned to Raby Hall and concealed it in a cabinet. White Rose, [*takes a folded document from his pocket*] behold a true copy of it made by myself, and the time has now come when you must have its original, and you *shall* have it, rest assured, before you reach her mansion. Read it carefully. (*Hands it to her.*) You will see that it is a register of marriage between Constance Neville Plantagenet and of Lenox Bertram, now Earl of Brackleigh. When I hand the original of this to you preserve it as you would your life, for it proclaims your honorable birth, as it records the *marriage* of the pair of whom Hagar spoke so falsely. White Rose, are you satisfied that I have proven my authority?

FLORET. [*With emotion.*] God in Heaven will reward you, Liper, for I am utterly incapable. Human language is utterly inadequate to express the gratitude welling over in my heart toward you.

LIPER. Remember, Floret, this document only proves the marriage of a man and woman; it does *not* prove you their child. I

and others know that you are so, but legal proof there is none. The secret of your birth was kept by the Marchioness and Fanny Shelley; the latter is dead—the Marchioness can alone furnish the proof you require. Will she make the admission, think you? At this very hour she loves her real husband madly, and regards with abhorrence her present Lord. The Earl of Brackleigh also worships her, and hesitates not to show his admiration openly, and would in his desperation proclaim their joint guilt in having committed bigamy, and with her share a prison. Should he do so he would be regarded as a madman, since, through the cunning foresight of she who is his real wife, he is absolutely without legal proof, and is consequenlly helpless, just as you are helpless, unless her proud nature relents and she calls you daughter.

FLORET. It must be tried. I feel that I am not base-born—that I have within my veins the blood of the high-born and the noble, and terrible as may be the task of facing her who is, but who has not acted to me as my mother, it shall not daunt me—there is nothing that I will not dare, to be able to kneel and offer up my thanks to Heaven, that if it has seen fit to chasten, afflict and try me sorely, even to make me an outcast, it has not doomed me to be nameless.

LIPER. Some of your old spirit spoke there, spring-flower.—You will have occasion for all of it that you can rouse into action. Your mother is a haughty, and I know a desperate woman. As I have said she realizes and keenly reproaches herself for her crime, but like many another she will not turn back, since she has faith that fate or death will ultimately release her. She has obtained from Hagar Lot a quantity of that fearful material, the Gipsies' poison. It is a fungus, and, once taken, the taker dies without manifesting a symptom that is in any degree suspicious—a violent coughing is its only telltale, and that is too natural to excite surprise.

FLORET. But, Liper, why do you speak of this poison to me?

LIPER. I would that I had it not to say, White Rose, but it is far better for me to warn you now than when it may be too late. White Rose, refuse utterly, to take any liquid while in her house. She is subtle and I fear remorseless.

FLORET. Such suspicions are not kind, Liper; but is there nothing existing which will counteract its baneful effects?

LIPER. There is. Long and patient search has enabled me to discover an antidote; I have tried it upon myself after swallowing some of the poison and am assured of its perfect efficacy. (*Handing her a small vial of colored liquid.*) A few drops of that in a glass of water, and taken internally, will destroy the effect of the venomous fungus and eradicate it from the system. Carry it always about you. It will prove effectual even when the poison is in its most virulent stage. Will you still go to her, White Rose?

FLORET. I do not shrink from it, Liper; death from her would be preferable to life without the interchange of one word with her—my mother, Liper, whom, knowingly, I have never seen—to whom I have never spoken.

LIPER, Heaven speed you then White Rose. Here is Hagar, who has grown impatient, I presume. Let her remain in ignorance—

Enter HAGAR LOT *at* L.

HAGAR. I have been looking after you, Floret. Are you ready now?

FLORET. I am in your hands. Do with me as you will. [*To Liper.*] Come with us, Liper, for a short distance.

[*All exit at* R.)

SCENE III. *A sitting room luxuriantly furnished; doors on* R, L, *and* C. *Marchioness of Westchester discovered reclining upon a lounge asleep; table near her upon which is a small basket and a small escretoire, Liper Leper enters softly at* L, *looks searchingly around; goes to the table, picks from the basket a bunch of keys, applies one of them to the escritore, opens it and takes therefrom a folded document and replaces it by one from his person similarly folded.*]

LIPER. [*Low tone.*) For the Wild White Rose. (*Waves it.*) Ay! The bud shall yet blossom and bloom [*Reads it.*]

[*Exits quickly and softly at* L.]

CONSTANCE. [*Awaking with a start.*] Pshaw! it was only a dream. Why should I fear? What shall destroy my fame now? Bertram? He cannot blight me with his new found love. Let him say to the world, "she is my wife." I will answer: "It is false! I challenge you to the proof." Aye! Where shall he find proof? Fanny Shelley,—the curate—all, all gone—dead—dead! The register of our marriage? Aha! aha! I, too, have that—the child —[*a wailing sob bursts from her lips*]—he never knew of its existence and he cannot—no, neither he nor any other living person can prove it to be mine. No! no! no! Yet it is my own—wretched—hateful—accursed—child—my child—my own child. My God! my God! [*Intense excitement.*] Am I to blame that I have spurned it from me as a thing of shame? Am I to be doomed to a life of acute and excruciating torture here, and to eternal perdition hereafter, because I have discarded, disowned it? Am I alone the guilty, heartless wretch? No—no! No—no! If he had been but noble in spirit, O, I should not stand here desolate, alone, and unloved, bowed down by the seathing taunts of my own conscience, cowering beneath an avalanche of degradation and ruin? Why was I cursed with such a heart as mine? I have loved this man! My God! I love him now!—wildly, distractedly; and he returns it madly, he says. Would that I could, but I cannot, retrace my steps. I dare not go back now; it is too late. I must go onward—on—on. I must not hesitate, or pause, at whatever cost—whatever crime.

[*Hagar Lot is seen at* C *door. She pushes Floret into the room, and retires shutting the door.*]

CONSTANCE. (*Starting agitatedly.*) What is the meaning of this strange intrusion? Who are you? [*Floret falls upon her knees at her feet grasping her dress, and in a tearful, supplicating manner.*]

FLORET. Mother! [*Constance with a frantic screech tries to release her dress and staggers to the lounge. Floret still clings to her, and follows her upon her knees.*] Mother, I am your child. Mother, do not disown me. Do not discard me. In mercy, in pity, do not deny me. In the name of Him who made you and all the world, be merciful to me, as you hope hereafter for mercy from Him. O, spurn me not. I am your child. One word, mother, one word to me.

CONSTANCE. [*With glaring eyes and maddened expression—hoarsely.*] Begone. Quit my sight. Leave me. This is some infamous plot hatched against me. Begone, brat, wretch, or I will curse you. Begone, beggar.

FLORET. [*Rising with a cry of anguish, pressing her hands upon her temples, twisting her wrists about her neck and writhing in a paroxysm of agony—then flinging her hands by her side and clenching them she draws herself proudly up, and in a quivering scornful, bitter tone.*] Woman, you shall hear me. I came here to implore justice. I remain here now to demand it. Look upon me; examine my features well, and tell me if you know them. [*Sternly.*] Tell me if you recognize in them the features of your dependant, murdered foster-sister, Fannie Shelley? Do they resemble them? Speak, am I like Fannie Shelley so much as to be her child? Mark me, woman. [*Points solemnly upward.*] Almighty God is looking down upon us. In his presence I call upon you to answer me truly—Am I Fannie Shelley's child? (*Constance cowers.*) You are silent. [*Intense energy.*] You shrink—you know that it is false. And to whom did you wilfully and deliberately repeat that falsehood?—my father and your husband, the Earl of Brackleigh?

CONSTANCE. [*Gasping.*] How dare you utter these wild, incoherent assertions to me? Begone, I know you not.

FLORET. [*Excitedly.*] I dare do this, and more; for you disown me—I who have been so long and so hopelessly the victim of your cruelty—I *will not* go. Listen to me; know me for that child whom you saw at Beachborough, a poor pauper; know me for that child whom you saw playing the part of a miserable beggar upon a race-course. Do you know me now? [*Sobs bitterly.*]

CONSTANCE. [*With a powerful effort.*] I know you only for the person you declare yourself to be, excepting that audacious declaration of being allied to me; but even that does not give you the right to obtrude yourself upon me. I might summon my servants and have you expelled, and even consigned to the custody of the police, but I have compassion on your youth and your sex; and I believe you are the child of Shelley, who was to me a faithful and devoted attendant. I therefore spare you the ignominy of a forcible expulsion, and I may feel disposed to promote your inter-

ests in some way, so that you may live in a decent and respectable manner, and not descend to such artifices as these, in the hope to wring from me some paltry hush money.

FLORET. [*Deep emotion.*] If your heart was not made of adamant you would never have consigned me to the fate you have. You would not see me thus stand before you, and address me in such heartless terms—nay, you would not have committed one single deed of the many which now lay heavy upon your soul. Poor murdered Fanny Shelley was, as you admit, your faithful devoted attendant. She sacrificed her life for you—and in reward for her faithful devotion—assuming that I am her child—how did you act toward me. Your imagination can form no conception of the miseries I have been compelled by you to endure; and for what?—not that I was the child of poor Fanny, but that I was your child, the unacknowledged offspring of a secret marriage between you and Viscount Bertram, now Earl of Brackleigh.

CONSTANCE. [*Furiously*] I will not listen to these preposterous inventions. I only wonder that I have listened to your words so long. I, however, command you now to retire, or—

FLORET. [*Vehemently.*] But you must, and you shall listen to them from me. It is far better that they should fall like blistering hail upon your ears from my lips, than they should be thundered into them from the mouths of others. You deny your marriage with the Viscount Bertram. Are you prepared to deny that you went to Brighton alone, and extracted from the book of the register of marriages, a leaf containing one of the entries.

CONSTANCE. [*Astounded.*] This is mere assertion.

FLORET. I have that abstracted leaf, in my possession.

CONSTANCE. [*Aside.*] My God. [*To Floret*] The scheme has been cleverly concocted, but you prove too much. Had I committed the act with which you have charged me, that leaf of the register would have been in my possession, not yours. [*Sneeringly.*]

FLORET. [*Coldly.*] It was in your possession, but it is now properly in mine. for it will help me to prove that I am—

CONSTANCE. [*Angrily.*] Stop. I again tell you to begone.—I have listened longer than I imagined I could have done to your foully-false accusations; now go. Leave me instantly or I will call my servants, and—

FLORET. [*Voice trembling with emotion.*] I will leave you now, with much unsaid that I had intended to say. It is perhaps as well as it is. I could have forgiven all that has passed, all that I have borne. I would have preserved your secret even to my own destruction, if you had said but one kind word to me, bestowed upon me one tender look—had pressed your lips to mine only once, and whispered in my ear, 'thou art my child!' I yearned only when I entered here that you should know me, that I might call you mother, and you confess me—if only to myself—to be your child; but now the *world* shall know me for whom I am, and—

[*Enter a maid servant hurriedly at* R. *At same instant from* C *enter Hagar Lot.*

SERVANT. (*Wringing her hands.* My Lady; my lady; the Marquis is approaching, my lady.

HAGAR. (*Catching Floret's wrist.*) You must accompany me.

FLORET. (*Throwing her hand off haughtily and flinging herself at Constance's feet with a wild cry of grief—and in half chocked accents.*) One word—one word—one little word. (*Constance stands unmoved.*) Do not drive me from you without a word.—One little word will seal my lips forever; though it force me to sacrifice everything that makes life so lovely to the young. O, O, O, one—one word moth—moth—mother. [*Falls fainting at her feet.*]

[*Enter the Marquis at* C, *and stands just over the threshold.*]

CONSTANCE. [*Covers her face.*] We are lost, lost, lost.

ACT IV.

ONE MONTH LATER.

SCENE I. *Susan Atten's apartment. A very comfortably furnished sitting room; doors on* R *and* C; *windows near each. Floret is discovered busily engaged in arranging the furniture.*

FLORET. [*Humming a tively song at intervals.*] Home again with Mamma Atten; and O, how happy I am. I cannot be so very, very bad, or Mamma Atten would not love me so much as she does, when my own mother so dislikes me. I pray to my Heavenly Father every night that He may bless my poor mother, and cause her to love me and acknowledge me, if only to myself, as her child; and I feel that He will hear and answer my prayer. In His mercy a heavy burden has been lifted from my heart, for Fannie Shelly, whom we all thought dead, has wandered back to her old home. Poor Godmamma Fannie—poor insane Fannie—after all these years in an asylum is among friends once more, and, thank God, with her reason almost bright again. It almost seems as though God was answering my prayers by restoring her reason and sending her to me, for she alone has the power to move my mother's heart, and give me a name before the world. What good news this will be to tell Victor when he comes to-night, as he has done every night until the illness of his father took him away, and now he has been gone two weeks; but his last letter says he shall be here to-night. [*Gleefully.*] O, how I do love him, and I know he does me, too, though he has never told me so—that is, not in words—but he has looked—O, *how* he has looked at me, and I *know* it well enough, but—but—but I *do* wish he would say so. [*Listening eagerly.*] Hark! that sounds like his step. It comes nearer—yes, yes, it's

Victor, it's Victor. [*Gets suddenly nervous regarding her personal appearance, runs to the glass, arranges her hair, etc; knocks are heard at the door.*] Oh, my! I musn't let him see how glad I am to see him. [*Busily dusting.*] Come in, [*calling,*] come in.

Enter LORD VICTOR, *dressed in deep mourning. Floret runs to him and extends a hearty welcome.*

VICTOR. I cannot tell you, Floret, how grateful I feel to know that you are glad to see me back again, or—

FLORET. (*Quickly.*) And why should I not be glad, Victor? You are everything to me—(*confusion*) I mean—I mean that you—that we—that you are my sincere friend, and of them I have too few not to be glad to see them after so long an absence as yours has been.

VICTOR. (*Smiling.*) Yes; the longest *two weeks* I ever spent in my life.

FLORET. (*Coquettishly pouting.*) I dont like to be laughed at and made fun of, Lord Victor. [*Aside.*] Oh, sho! what a ninny I made of myself.

VICTOR. (*Gravely.*) Upon the contrary, Floret, I was never more serious in my life. I pray you be seated while I address you. I have something of much importance to say to you.

FLORET. (*Appears confused.*) Thank you, my Lord—with—with—your permission I had rather remain as I am.

VICTOR. (*Standing near her.*) Be it so. Observe my attire. You will perceive that I am dressed in deep mourning. During my absence from you I have suffered the loss by death of my dear father, who was so ill when I left you last—

FLORET. [*Grasping his hand, and in a tone of hearty sympathy.*) Oh, I am so sorry for you Victor.

VICTOR. I am now the Marquis of Broadlands. (*Floret drops his hand.*) I have not mentioned this change in my position, Floret, with any other object than to acquaint you with the fact that I am responsible to no person on earth but myself for my actions, and I should say to you what I am now about to reveal with the same sincerity if I knew you to be a veritable Poor Girl, the daughter of that strange old gipsy man who had you under his care, and with more sincerity than if I knew you to be the only child of one of our proudest dukes.

FLORET. (*Distressed.*) I pray you, my Lord, to spare me further remarks.

VICTOR. Floret, you are too keenly sensitive; but pardon me—it scarcely allows you to be unjust to me in your thoughts.

FLORET. (*Off her guard.*) Unjust to you, my lord! You wrong me by that expression. I have never been unjust to you in my thoughts. On the contrary I have always regarded you with the ten—(*confusion*) with the kind—with, I wish to say, proper appreciation of your worth.

VICTOR. (*Quickly.*) Floret, when we first met I was greatly attracted by your face, and much struck, not only by the fact of

your making to me the offer of a bouquet of wild flowers of your own arrangement, but by your manner and your words. I smiled at your offering, and you, with a swift and rising color begged me not to scorn your gift. You told me that it was all you had to bestow—you had nothing better, or you would give it to me. Floret, I promised that I would preserve that small bouquet while I lived. I have it now. Will you not believe me?

FLORET. (*Faintly.*) I—I do believe you.

VICTOR. I met you a second time at Ascot Races, when, strangely enough, a second time my services were requisite to give you aid. That interview served to make still brighter in my mind the impression of you, that I had already formed, and Floret, that night my self-examination proved to me that I loved you. [*Floret turns half away to conceal her emotion.*] That I loved you; truly, fondly, devotedly and sincerely loved you, Floret, as a man should love a woman, as woman loves when she does love—without reserve. It has been my privilege to see very much of you since your return home. My intercourse with you has served but to enhance my affection for you, Floret, and now I am here—here, Floret, untrammeled by a consideration, here with a full heart, in which there lurks not a scruple, with a full knowledge of your condition and my own, to entreat you to grant me your hand, that you may become my beloved, adored, honored wife. (*Floret intensely agitated.*) Perhaps you have already [*huskily*] given your heart to another, and my confession only pains and distresses you?

FLORET. No!—O, no—no!

VICTOR. Floret—dear, dear Floret, have I offended you? [*Floret raises her eyes, suffused with tears, to his and glances at him reproachfully.*] May I hope? [*Takes her hand.*] O, Floret, one word—one little word—for my heart is bursting. [*Holds out his arms and Floret flings herself into them—leans her head upon his shoulder and sobs for joy.*]

FLORET. Pardon my weakness, Victor, but I am so, so happy. O, I have loved you and thought of you, and lived for you ever since I was a little child.

[*Enter* SUSAN *at* R, *omitting to notice their position. They quickly and confusedly separate.*]

SUSAN. O, Floret, I have such good news to tell you. Fanny has recovered her reason and she knows now who you are, dear Floret. She knows that you are the child she brought to Beachborough, and who cost her her reason—no—no—I mean—who was reared there as the Poor Girl, and who once suffered so much.—But she wishes so earnestly to see you that she is now on her way down stairs. She will be here directly. I will go and meet her. [*Exits* R.]

FLORET. O, Victor, I feel so happy and joyous—but—but the room may be full of strangers to you presently, so per—perhaps you had better go—hadn't you Victor? You know I should love

dearly to have you stop—but—but, well you know you can come again?

VICTOR. [*Clasping his in her arms and kissing her.*] Yes, yes, I will go, dear Floret, but I will come again every day. [*Going.*] May God bless you, Floret, farewell.

FLORET. Good bye, Victor, good bye. [*Victor exit* C.]

Enter FANNY *supported by* SUSAN *and* HARRY. *She is sickly looking and walks feebly. They conduct her to an arm chair.*

FLORET. [*Half timidly taking Fannie's hand.*] Do you know me, Fannie?

FANNIE. Know you! O, yes, Miss. I recognized your features instantly. Could I ever forget them?

FLORET. [*Breathlessly.*] Whose features do mine resemble?

FANNIE. [*Looking earnestly at her.*] Those of your lady mother, Miss. When last I beheld her, she looked scarcely older than you—as fair and beautiful, only haughtier, prouder, more scornful in her expression.

FLORET. [*Anxiously.*] You speak of your foster-sister!

FANNIE. I do, Miss, of my foster-sister whom I loved as the breath of life, my foster-sister and your mother.

FLORET. [*Earnestly.*] And her name?

FANNIE. [*Musingly.*] The world then knew it as Constance Edith Plantagenet, but I knew it as that of Viscountess Bertram.

FLORET. [*Quickly.*] You were present at her marriage?

FANNIE. I was, Miss.

FLORET. [*Eagerly.*] And attached your name to the register as one of the witnesses?

FANNIE. [*Readily.*] I did, Miss.

FLORET. [*Producing the register—pointing.*] Is that your hand writing?

FANNIE. [*Firmly.*] It is.

FLORET. [*Sigh of relief.*] Thank Heaven!

FANNIE. [*Surprise.*] But, in Heaven's name, how came you possessed of that paper? It was in a large book that I signed my name.

FLORET. You shall know all, shortly. I wish first of all to establish my identity. You will aid me, will you not?

FANNIE. (*Warmly.*) With my whole heart.

FLORET. (*Anxiously.*) Do you remember my birth?

FANNIE. O, well—well I remember that dreadful night. It was a terrible night. It rained very heavily, and the wind howled and the thunder roared, and the lightning flashed in sheets of flame, I went alone for the doctor, and in his presence, that of mine and of God only, was the child born. I attended to its first wants, and to those of its wretched, helpless mother. It was I who shielded it in my arms when its mother refused to look upon it in her bitter, unnatural hate. I who bore it to a nurse, who nourished it. I, who, upon my knees placed it before her, when she resolved to part from it and from me forever, when she extorted

from me a promise— O, my God! (*Utters a scream and falls upon her knees.*) What have I done!—what have I done! O, my God! pardon me. I have violated my oath to preserve this, her secret, sacredly, until she herself or death absolved me from it. Go. (*To Floret.*) Leave me. G. You have made me break my vow. (*Bows her head and weeps and trembles convulsively. Floret is giving away to her emotion on Susan's shoulder, who is caressing her.*)

HARRY. (*Raising Fannie and pressing her to his breast—in a tender, earnest voice.*) Look up, Fannie, girl; look up girl, thee'st done no wrong. Thee hast parted with thy love—with reason—nay for a time thee hast parted with thy life, to keep that creature's sad secret. Thee hast done thy duty by her nobly, bravely; but thee hast a duty, too, girl, to her who first rested in thy arms in this world. Thee did'st vow to thyself to be a mother to yon girl; and thee wast so when all the world fell off from thee, when even I—a coward and a dog for losing faith in thee—fell away, too, and would have tried to tear thy secret out of thy heart, even at the cost of thy life and mine. An' thee would'st have been a mother to her still, had I not doubted and condemned thee, would'st thee not? (*Fanny still sobbing.*) She has been all her life a poor girl, Fannie, a poor, ragged girl. She be a poor girl still.—Wilt thee girl, for the sake of maintaining a weak promise made to a hard hearted woman, doom this bright and beautiful girl to be a poor girl to the end of her days? Wilt thee do this, Fannie, an' —an' keep my love for thee, too?

FANNIE. (*Suddenly throwing herself at Floret's feet.*) Take me to her, to Miss Constance—the Viscountess Bertram. God knows what now—take me to her! I will pray to her. I will clasp her knees. I will not leave her until she has absolved me from my oath!

FLORET. (*Raising her and twining her arm around her neck.*) Compose yourself dear Fanny. Calm your feelings, and when you are stronger and better, we will together proceed to her.

FANNIE. (*Releasing herself.* Now, shall it be; not a day—not an hour shall pass without my presenting myself before her. I will go now. Come, come, I know the way.

HARRY. (*Soothingly.*) Gently, girl, thee'st exciting thyself too much.

FANNIE. (*Decidedly.*) No, Harry, I am not mad now. I have a duty to perform; you have said that I have, and I will do it. Come—come.

FLORET. Harry! Harry, you must restrain her. She is weak and sickly; she will faint on the way.

HARRY. (*Reverently.*) She be in the hands of God, Miss. Let her have her own way. He will conduct her to the right end. I feel sure o' that!

FANNIE, Come quickly, child; come—come! (*Grasps Floret's waist and all exit at* C.)

SCENE II, *A magnificently furnished library; large and heavy bookcase on* R; *lounge, chairs, tables, etc. Doors on* L *and* C.—*Enter the Marquis of Westchester at* L *very excitedly.*

MARQUIS. [*Determinedly.*] I must see her. I must see her. I will. I must come to some decided, positive, and determinate arrangement with her. She shall not foil, elude, escape me. She must be mine under any name. Wife, mistress, slave—she shall be mine. I cannot endure this torture; damnation can have no pangs to equal the agonies which convulse me. She shall never be his—the Earl of Brackleigh, who would seduce her affections. No!—no! I have insulted him and received his friend. I'll slay him. He shall never leave the point of my weapon with life even fluttering in his heart. O, woman, woman, what will you have to answer for if you repulse me as you have hitherto done? [*He sinks into a chair and covers his face with his hands.*]

[*Enter* CONSTANCE *from* C *haughtily.*]

CONSTANCE. (*Distantly.*) I am here. What have you to say to me?

MARQUIS. [*Starting up and trying to conceal his emotion.*] Madam, since we stood at the altar together, we have never been in that relation to each other in which a clear and frank understanding would have placed us.

CONSTANCE. [*Coldly.*] We have not.

MARQUIS. I wish to come to that understanding.

CONSTANCE. [*Firmly.*] And I.

MARQUIS. When we were married—

CONSTANCE. [*Abruptly.*] Stay! with our past we are both acquainted—a weary, weary past it has been to me; let it be a matter of memory—hateful memory it must be to both; but do not let us discuss it. The events of last night will bring us to the point at once. Speak of that.

MARQUIS. [*Flushed and maddened, though trying to articulate clearly.*] You are right, Madam. You frequently have made a boast that you have sustained beyond the possibility of impeachment the name of Westchester.

CONSTANCE. (*Firmly.*) I have done so.

MARQUIS. [*Sternly.*] But you have menaced me with intentions on your part to stain it with the foulest iniquity!

CONSTANCE. I did it for a purpose—for wilfulness—to relieve my brain of the pressure which your unworthy suspicions heaped upon it.

MARQUIS. (*Quickly.*) But I saw you last night at the reception of that infernal horse-racing woman, speaking not in earnest tones, but with the familiarity which—which—which—one servant would adopt in addressing another, to that object of my detestation, my abhorrence, my fiercest hate, Lord Brackleigh.

CONSTANCE. [*Aside.*] Heaven help me, I will end this now

even though a prison cell be my portion forevermore. [*Turning.*] You did, my Lord Marquis of Westchester, perceive me in conversation with the Earl of Brackleigh, but not with the low familiarity, which your vulgar conception attributed to it, but with the earnestness and friendly communion which should subsist between *husband and wife.*

MARQUIS. [*Staggers and gasping.*] I—I—do not understand you, woman.

CONSTANCE. (*Coldly.*) You shall. You appear to object to my conversing with the Earl of Brackleigh.

MARQUIS. (*Frenzied.*) With my whole heart, soul, will, being, I do.

CONSTNCCE. [*Laughing shrilly.* I am his wife. (*The Marquis utters a wild cry, groans and gasps for breath.*]

MARQUIS. [*Hoarsely.*] Wretch, you have foully dishonored me! You—.

CONSTANCE. [*Sternly.*] Beware, how you attempt to breathe one word derogatory to my chastity, even in my ears. For seventeen years I have lived with the incubus of your name upon me, and beneath your roof. You have never dared to lay a finger on me, even in pleasantry. At the alter I swore to be true to my husband. I have been, as Heaven is and will be my judge!

MARQUIS. I—I—am your husband.

CONSTANCE. (*Vehemently.*) No, nor have you ever been other than the emptiest mockery of that name. Listen. When Captain Wolverton you married Ada Vivan—

MARQUIS. (*Shouting.*) It is false; it is a false fabrication—a lie.

CONSTANCE. (*Quickly and sneeringly.*) Of whose? Of yours or of Matthew Warlock, who was your regimental servant when you were an officer in the Second Life Guards and with whom I had an interview last night previous to the reception of the Countess of Newmarket's.

MARQUIS. (*Panting.*) Woman—

CONSTANCE. You were married to Ada Vivan at Prince Court Chapel, Pall Mall, upon the 10th of February in the presence of Matthew Warlock, and whom you have recently thought dead.—Was it not so? I know that after your marriage a girl was born. When you married me, you desired to possess a woman whose form and face, allied to distinguished birth, might make you the envy of your peers. You obtained—a statue. I took you on the pretense of an ambition for a coronet, but for the purposes of revenge—a revenge which has recoiled upon myself, insomuch that I have suffered long and deeply in consequence of my own mad folly. It is quite needless that I should tell you why I parted—the separation was by mutual consent—from my husband, why I discarded my child. You, Lord Westchester, have but to look upon the past as I shall—as one of humiliating and bitter memory, and to place in your household, she who is legitimately entitled to preside here as its mistress. Last night I became ac-

quainted with the full particulars of your former marriage—to-night I leave your roof forever. I have only to add that as I—when I pass into the fresh air from the heated atmosphere of this abode—I shall forget you; so I hope that the memory of me in your mind will die with my departure from you. [*Turns to go. He motions her to remain.*]

MARQUIS. [*Gaspingly.*] It is but just that you should listen to me after the patient hearing that I have given you. I confess I am overwhelmed by your communication, and I find it difficult not only to speak, but to think, with coherency. I own I am taken by surprise; [*calmly*] but after the first horror has in some degree subsided, I seem to feel that this mutual explanation is for the best. After what you have acknowledged, I will confess that I have been married, and that I believe that the person whom I married is yet living; but I was married by a trick—by a piece of jugglery which was unknown to me; and I married you at least in good faith. However, that is all ended—is over; the suspicions, agonies, miseries of years, have ended with your confession. But for the sake of the innocent, it is proper that we should proceed cautiously. By the innocent, I mean, firstly, the Countess of Brackleigh. She surely was unmarried when the Earl sought her hand and led her to the alter?

CONSTANCE. [*Falteringly.*] I—I—believe so.

MARQUIS. In that case, unquestionably, Brackleigh has committed bigamy.

CONSTANCE. He—he is at least safe fr m your attack—or mine,

MARQUIS. [*Quickly.*] But not from that of the Countess! and I shall at least have the power of enlightening her upon her painful and degrading position, unless—

CONSTANCE. Unless wh at?

MARQUIS. [*Suddenly falling upon his knees—passionately.*] Unless you save me from despair, madness, crime, perdition. I love you. I have loved you passionately since first we wedded.—I have borne my passion in secret. I have suffered it to prey upon my heart, my soul, rather than pain you with it; but the time has come when silence would be idiocy. I love you, and I am determined that you shall be mine. No slave shall so serve you, no devotee shall so adore you as I will if you will only receive me — I am so in the eyes of the world—as your husband. I do not ask, or expect from you, love; but you can accept mine, and return me gentlenes and kindness; it will be all I shall ever hope for, all I shall ever ask of you; do not spurn me from you; do not discard me; do not, I entreat, I implore you—

CONSTANCE. [*Indignantly.*] Rise, Westchester. I command you; you insult me; you outrage me.

MARQUIS. [*Springs to his feet—fury and amazement.*] Insult —outrage you?

CONSTANCE. [*Sternly.*] Yes, you forget that I am a married woman, and not your wife.

MARQUIS. [*Quickly.*] Your effrontery has no parallel. I again warn you—nay, I entreat you, not to reject me. Reflect—Shame will have been heaped upon my name, and wherefore should I pause at any crime? My own life, without you, I shall not hold as of the value of a minute's purchase, and if I am to be hurled to perdition, do you imagine that I will not drag others down in my fall, too? Do you think *you* will escape me? do you think *he* will escape me? No! I swear that if my hopes, and desires, and wishes are to be shattered, I will crush those of all who have in any way aided to destroy mine. [*Constance recoils.*] Your answer! [*Hissing.*] Your answer! Remember, you, too, have a child. Ah! I have seen her. Reject me, and I'll reach your heart through her. Your answer!

CONSTANCE. [*Scornfully.*] I scarcely imagined that to your other weakness you would add silly childishness. Let it for once satisfy you that I hate you, and that my decision is therefore irrevocable.

MARQUIS. [*Mighty effort to appear calm.*] So, then, all between us has ended forever, and events, however desperate, must take their course. I will not detain you longer than to tell you, that I have to-day most grossly insulted and struck the Earl of Brackleigh, and I have received a note—a challenge, from your paramour—

CONSTANCE. [*Quickly.*] My husband, sir.

MARQUIS. [*Hissing.*] Your pander, woman. Your mean, truckling wretch, who loved you dearly and honorably enough to permit you proceed to the arms of another, with his full, free consent. [*Constance groans and staggers.*] No matter, let that go—you are a pair well fitted for each other. I shall go out with him within the hour, and I shall either fall by his hand, or he will by mine. If I reach his heart, and I shall, woman, I will hiss your name in his ear. I will call upon him to curse you as the author of all this mischief and misery. I will seek your child out, and tell her that you have slain her father, your own honor and hers—

CONSTANCE. [*Wildly.*] This must not be—this duel must not take place. Great God, it will be murder!

MARQUIS. [*Excitedly.*] It shall be murder; for he shall not leave the field alive, if I shoot him down, when he is unprepared, in cold blood.

CONSTANCE. (*Gaspingly.*) No, no!

MARQUIS. (*Furiously.*) I have sworn it, and I will do it.—Wretch, you will be his murderess, as you will be mine, and that of your helpless child, whose only shame—but bitter shame—is that she is your daughter—

CONSTANCE. (*Gasping.*) Peace! You slay me with your words.

MARQUIS. (*Frantically.*) No. You have had no mercy on others. What mercy should be shown to you? No. You have braved it well and long, but my turn has come. Why, I will tell

your husband, woman—you are fond of that word—how often you have caressed me, fondled, toyed with me.

CONSTANCE. (*Madly.*) Liar!

MARQUIS. (*Foaming.*) What matters it if I am so in fact? I will swear to its truth. Why, will not he remember how you showered your tender endearments upon him; aye, and when I avow upon oath that you have sated me with the like voluptuous dalliance, he will believe me, not you. Men always believe such stories of woman, whether they are true or not.

CONSTANCE. (*Frenziedly.* I will hear no more. (*Totters toward the door, but ere reaching it she falls upon the floor in a swoon. The Marquis catches her up, kisses her forehead, and presses her to his breast; then lays her tenderly upon the lounge.*)

MARQUIS. (*Groaning,*) It is the last childish weakness of which I shall be guilty. Be this the proof. [*Takes from his pocket a paper, pouring from it into a glass a white powder, then fills it with water.*] Surrender her to him! Never, though the scaffold be my portion.

CONSTANCE. (*Partly raising herself, one hand upon her throat —murmuring hoarsely.*) Water, water. (*Marquis hands her the glass and she drains it to the last drop. The Marquis then takes the glass and dashes it to the floor. Goes and pulls the bell rope. Enter maid-servant.*)

MARQUIS. Your mistress has fainted, woman: attend to her.—[*Constance staggers to her feet.*] Go; now, and unto all eternity, farewell. (*Constance drawing herself up proudly, turns upon him a look of intense scorn—then staggers from the room at c followed by girl. The Marquis sits upon the lounge and gazes fixedly upon the floor through his hands.*)

[*Enter* EDMOND *dressed as a military officer—General's uniform.*]

EDMOND. (*Soberly.*) Westchester; a very shocking event has happened, and it is only right that you should be made acquainted with it.

MARQUIS. (*Impatiently.*) What is it?

EDMOND. The Countess of Brackteigh was discovered dead just before the Earl departed for the place agreed upon!

MARQUIS. Dead!

EDMOND. Yes! It was very sudden—very unexpected—very horrible, I believe. Dont you think that as a mere matter of human feeling, and out of respect for the memory of the departed lady, we had better postpone this little affair?

MARQUIS. (*Aside.*) This leaves him free—free to claim her. (*Turning.*) Postpone it. No, certainly not. Never.

EDMOND. (*Surprise.*) But the circumstances, man alive.

MARQUIS. Are only such as to make me more eager for the meeting. You do not know the Earl. I do. I should not be surprised to hear that poison—

EDMOND. (*Quickty.*) Hush! hush! Murther, what would you insinuate?

MARQUIS. (*Excitedly.*) I care not! Anything, everything rather than he should be permitted to sneak out of meeting me foot to foot, face to face.

ESMOND. If it's that you mane, I've nothing further to say, Westchester. Only jest this—your goin' to work a little more like a butcher than a gintlemen.

MARQUIS. (*Fiercely.*) How?

ESMOND. (*Distantly.*) Whisht. We'll settle our trifling discussion on this point afterward; your little quarrel would have kept until it would have been dacent to fight it out; but since you are determined, the devil a help there's for it, and so you must fight?

MARQUIS. (*Grating his teeth.*) *I am determined!* (*Looking at his watch.*) The hour is near at hand. Come, follow me.

[*Exits.*]

ESMOND. The bloodthirsty, murtherin' villain. By the maiden aunt of Moses, he manes killing his man, if he does not first get pinked himself. (*Exits after the Marquis.*)

[*Enter* FANNY SHELLEY AND FLORET *at back* C.]

FANNIE. Bear with this way of entering the house, miss, you shall leave it by the grand entrance; and as a great lady.

FLORET. [*Excited whisper.*] But Lady Westchester is not here?

FANNIE. [*Positively.*] She is, I know it,—I feel it here. (*Hand on her bosom.*] I know it, because I have seen what is about to happen, in my dreams. [*Floret sits in a chair, and Fannie kneels at her feet and takes one of her hands; then Fannie sings through the first verse of "O! Oranges." As the last note dies away, Constance appears upon the threshold of* R *door, looking at Fannie; she is trembling violently, and horror and amazement are stamped upon her countenance. Fannie is still singing.*]

Yet cheeks there are,—yet cheeks there are,
Sweeter,—O, Good God.

CONSTANCE. [*Staggering into the room, and sinking slowly upon her knees; with out-stretched arms and head bent.*] Mercy! Fannie!—mercy, my child—mercy O, God! [*Her head declines to her knees, and she is falling, but Fannie springs and catches her; as Constances feels her touch, she gives a scream of shuddering horror and partly rising, staggers to the* L *front corner of stage; and buries her face in her hand.*]

FANNIE. [*Following her up.*] Miss Constance, dear Miss Constance—I know you by no other name—look upon me, I am Fannie, your devoted friend, your foster sister—miss—Lady Constance, we nursed at the same breast. Dear, dear foster-sister, you were attached to me when we were girls, and you said you loved me when you were a woman, when even we parted, as I thought—ay, and so you thourght too—forever.

CONSTANCE. [*Pressing her hands upon her head, and in a tone*

of bewilderment.] Is this no dream—no wild phantom of the imagination—no spectral vision, conjured up by my distracted and disordered brain? Can it be real? or am I mad, and this one of the frenzied illusions which the mad see? [*Turning to Fannie.*] Does my brain mock me? Do my eyes deceive me? Is it indeed you, Fannie?

FANNIE. [*Expression of entreaty.*] It is indeed, Fannie Shelley, your foster-sister?

CONSTANCE. (*Speaking with some difficulty and coughing slightly.*] I was informed that—you—were dead.

FANNIE. To the world I was dead for a time, and all that was in it was dead to me, for it pleased Heaven to take from me my reason.

CONSTANCE. You were mad?

FANNIE. I was, it was supposed, hopelessly mad, but it pleased the same Great Power which deprived me of my senses to restore them to me.

CONSTANCE. [*Coughing—feebly.*] How did you gain admittance here?

FANNIE. By the same way that I have come into and departed from this house many times.

CONSTANCE. (*Colder tone.*) And why have you sought me?

FANNIE. Can you ask that of me—of me, Lady Constance?—Have you forgotten what I endured and suffered for your sake?—Do you remember what caused my madness? and what—what—what—laid—both—my parents—in one grave? [*Last in tears.*] What brought me here! O, Lady Constance! (*Tearfully.*) Look there! (*Vehemently and pointing to Floret who stands gazing entreatingly with hands clasped.*) Ask me what forced me away from you. I will answer you: Look there! Ask me again what brought me to you, and I will still answer: Look there! (*Constance trembles in every limb and is siezed with a fit of coughing.*) Oh, foster-sister, foster-sister! I was from childhood the slave of your will, your caprice. I bore with you because I knew you had still a generous, affectionate heart. But there stands your child. Have you not one spark of tenderness—one trait of human kindness, charity, love for her, Lady Constance—woman, if you are woman—for your own flesh and blood—not only the living image of yourself, but of Her, the mother of that God who died to save us all? If you would not see me fall dead at your feet, speak—not to me, but to her, your child! [*Constance staggers back; gasping, panting and trembling; Fannie takes Florets hand.*] She has endured ignominy, humiliation, suffering of which you can form no conception. She has borne all—all but shame, or vice, or crime. She—she, Lady Constance, is free from sin. I took her from you; I restore her to you. I place her on your bosom, mother of the discarded, and you will not dare to thrust her thence, if you would not call down upon you Heaven's wrathful lightning to wither and destroy you.

FLORET. (*Voice trembling with emotion—clasped hands.*)—

Mother! mother! tell me only that I am your child—only that—and I will pray God to bless you.

CONSTANCE. (*Suddenly turning.*) God have mercy upon me. (*Throwing open her arms and catching Floret within them presses passionately to her breast.*) My child, my poor, abused, long deserted child! pity me! pity me. You cannot forgive me. (*Kisses Floret's forhead passionately, and Floret returns with frenzied earnestness and delight. Floret is about to kneel at her feet, but Constance raises her to her bosm again.*]

CONSTANCE. (*Coughing—hoarsely.*) Such should be my position to you. O, I have wronged y u deeply. I have sinned. I have sinned. Where, where, will be the end of this? Mercy, Heaven! I am unable to endure this dreadful emotion. Let me be seated. I feel as though I was dying. (*Sits upon the lounge, when another fit of coughing siezes her more violent than before.*)

FLORET. (*Anxiously.*) O, mother, mother, what ails you? Are you ill?

CONSTANCE. (*With difficulty.*) It is nothing worth heeding. It is the result of ceaseless, dreadful anxiety—of distracting fear is of tormenting doubts, of passionate regrets and remorse. It is impossible for you, for any creature breathing, to surmise what I have suffered. I doomed you to a life of privation—God only knows what; but I doomed myself, too, to a life which has been one long, protracted torture. I have been punished fearfully here —there needs no other hell than the upbraidings of a guilty conscience. (*Another fit of violent coughing and strangulation. Floret appeers anxious.*) It is nothing, and even if it be the harbidger of death, I shall welc ome it.

FLORET. [*Tearfully.*] No, no, no. You will yet live to occasion me many years of happiness. O, say not so?

CONSTANCE, (*Gasping.*) I will try to live long enough to draw up a statement which will assign to you your proper place in society. I will declare to the world that you are the daughter of myself and my husband, Viscount Bertram, now Earl of Brackleigh—

FLORET. [*Kneeling by her side, with clasped hands upraised.*] Almighty Heaven! accept the grateful offering of a full heart tendered in thankfulness for thy mercy.

CONSTANCE. [*Folding Floret in her arms.*] I—will—render —you full justice; at best a poor atonement for what I have compelled you to undergo. To the statement which acknowledges you as the child of the Viscount and Viscountess Bertram, I will—I will—further—make—such reparation—[*Coughs terribly. Floret presses her hand upon her brow thoughtfully.*]

FLORET. [*Quickly.*] Mother! dear mother, can you remember of taking liquid from anyone recently?

CONSTANCE. [*Look of horror.*] O, I remember now! I have been with Westchester. I have had an interview with him, and I took water from h s hand. My God! I am poisoned! (*Sinks back exhausted.*]

FLORET. [*Eagerly.*] Look up, dearest mother, fear not, you shall be saved.

CONSTANCE. (*Feebly.*) It is the gipsies' poison. It has no antidote.

FLORET. [*Passionate vehemence.*] It has. Liper Leper gave it to me, and, Heaven be praised, I have the antidote with me. [*Takes from her bosom a small vial.*) A glass, quick, quick, Fannie, a glass. [*Fannie procures a glass and Floret pours some of the liquid into it—with a trembling hand she gives it to Constance, who although coughing violently, quaffs the contents eagerly and pants and gasps terribly—presently her agitation subsides and placing her hand upon her throat she turns to Floret, and in a clear voice.*]

CONSTANCE. Thank God—my child. You—you have saved me.

[*Maid servant enters—wringing her hands.*]

SERVANT. O, my Lady, prepare yourself for terrible news. Something dreadful has happened.

[*Enter* BERTRAM, *supported by* ESMOND *and* VICTOR, *He seems very faint.*]

BERTRAM. [*Faintly.*) Where is the Marquis? I trust he was not badly injured. I tried to save his life.

VICTOR. He is dead, my lord.

ESMOND. But, by the holy saints, my Lord Brackleigh, you've been killed by a dirty piece of murther, any way. [*They lay him upon the lounge when he becomes senseless.*] He desired us to bring him here, my Lady.

CONSTANCE. Thank Heaven, he is alive. Come my child.—[*She kneels by him.*]

VICTOR. [*Perceiving Floret.*] My God! Floret you here? How—what—what is the meaning—

FLORET. Hush, Victor, all shall be explained presently?—*Kneels by the side of Constance.*]

CONSTANCE. [*Gentle tones quivering with emotion.*] Bertram. Husband. [*He turns and extends his hand, Constance takes it and bending her head on Floret's shoulder weeps bitterly. Floret is sobbing convulsively. Other characters in the room look on wonderingly.*]

BERTRAM. [*Gently—faintly.*) Do not grieve, Constance My hour has come, and we must part forever. Do not recur to the past—

CONSTANCE. [*Bitter anguish.* I—I— have slain you! O, Bertram, Bertram, how can I bare my heart before you, to show you the agonizing repentance with which I recall my madness, my wickedness—

BERTRAM. Cease, Constance, to speak of it—to me, I have sinned so much, that when you refer to your error, you but make me

feel my own more deeply. I must not throw blame upon you, because I have reaped the rank and bitter weeds which I myself have sown. Let us speak only of the future. I have something on my mind—which—[*Noticing Floret.*] I—O, God of Heaven! is it that I am delirious, or is there a figure kneeling by your side—a form—a face which has haunted me in my sleep? Constance, is it a reality—or only my distempered imagination? [*To Floret.*) In the name of mercy, in the name of Heaven, if you have life, speak to me. Who are you?

FLORET. [*Gasping spasmodically.*] I am your child—I am your child. You have denied me; but, indeed—indeed—I am your own child.

BERTRAM. [*Groaning.*] Constance, as you hope for mercy hereafter, speak to me. Who is that by your side?

CONSTANCE. (*half screaming.*) Bertram, Bertram, it is your child and mine. She was born at Beachborough Abbey before we parted. I—I—am to blame. I only am to blame. O, mercy—mercy—do not curse me, Bertram, do not curse me. (*Buries her face in the cushions and weeps agonizedly.*)

BERTRAM. [*Fervently.* Almighty God, for this mercy I thank Thee. To have lived over this moment disarms Fate of any further power to grieve me. (*Turns to Floret and clasping her in his arms.*] My poor child; my poor child; how you have been wronged; how you must have suffered. O, if I had but known that you were mine—what happiness—what joy it would have been to me, to have reared you, to have loved you, to have made you my pride—my happiness. Kiss me—my dear child—too late known—too shortly beloved. [*Floret kisses him passionately, hanging and clinging about his neck with an intensity of affection and delight.*)

BERTRAM. (*Feebly.*) Constance, my love—my first love—my only and my lost love—when I am gone, believe that I always regarded you, in these last moments, as when I met you—as young and beautiful as she who is now by my side—our child. Constance, I know that you loved me, and that you would have remained firm and loyal to the last—

CONSTANCE. O, Bertram, Bertram, hear me—believe me, in the face of the Supreme Creator who gazes down upon us both at this dread moment, that I speak the truth to you. I have been true to you Bertram—my husband—true to that marriage vow which bound my honor to yours—true in thought, in deed, in look chaste, I swear, Bertram. Do not die without believing, in your heart and soul; that the immaculate purity which you purchased at the altar with solemn vows, bears, even now, not a tinge or taint of shame upon it.

FLORET. [*Taking Victor's hand, who is standing near, and who has been listening eagerly.*] Kneel quickly, Victor, and let us receive my father's blessing ere he dies! [*They kneel.*]

BERTRAM. (*Intense fervor.*) I die, happy!

FLORET. (*Quickly.*) No, no, no, dear father. Give us your

blessing ere you die. I am the promised wife of Lord Victor. O bless us—bless us before you die.

BERTRAM. (*Hands upon their heads.*) Take her, Victor—(*feebly*)—take her—love her and treat her tenderly—and as you do to her, so may God in Heaven do to you, and may He bless you, even as I do in my dying hour. (*Gasping.*) My wife—my child—one last embrace! (*He folds them in his arms and amid their sobs falls back on the lounge, dead. During the latter part of this last sentence all in the room kneel.*)

THE END.

STORY.

During the early portion of their lives, the Earl of Brackleigh (Bertram) and Constance Plantagenet, contracted a secret, but legitimate marriage. Soon after, the newly made husband and wife quarelled and separated, each agreeing never to molest the other in whatever marriage they might again contract. The issue of this marriage, but wholly unknown to its father, was the child Floret, for whom its mother at its birth conceived a violent hatred, and under the most solemn vows of secrecy that its birth should never be revealed to any living creature, the child was transferred to the arms and future care of the mother's maid and foster sister, Fannie Shelley, who was so devotedly attached to her mistress' interests, that she consented to rear it as her own, and the child was forthwith conveyed to her own far distant home. Upon arriving among her friends with the newly born child in her arms, and not being able to give a satisfactory explanation of its presence, she was accused by her lover (Harry) with being its guilty mother. A violent quarrel ensued, and this, together with having to bear the burden of its real mother's secret, dethroned her reason. One morning Fannie Shelley was missing, and upon a search being instituted, articles of her wearing apparel were found floating in the river. It was supposed that she had drowned herself, and in an agony of remorse her former lover took the child Floret home to his sister, Susan Atten, to rear and educate. Meantime the child's mother had contracted a second marriage with Lord Westchester, (he supposing he had woed and won a maid) but her guilty secret weighing heavily on her mind, she surreptitiously removed from the Church registry the record and all trace of her former marriage, and suspicious that her child might in some way complicate her future, she contracted, under an assumed name, with the Gipsy girl, Hagar Lot, to abduct it and so effectually dispose of it that by no chance or possibility could it ever again cross her path, or in any way be ever cognizant of the fact that it was other than its designed future should make it—an outcast! This scheme was so far consummated that Hagar Lot stole the child from Mamma Atten (who afterwards made an unavailing search for its whereabouts) and after marking it, placed it in the charge of an old Gipsy of her tribe, with the understanding that at some future day she would again take it from him. Years passed by, and the child who had been educated to believe herself a Gipsy, and the daughter of the old man and woman who had her under their control, became desperate at the cruel treatment she received at their hands, and resolved upon escaping from them, which resolution she ultimately carries into execution. The Daddy to whom she has made herself extremely valuable by selling flowers, is wild at her loss, while his wife (Grannam) who has regarded her as a burden, is extremely indifferent, but both are discovered searching.

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